ANGELO GUICCIARDINI;

OR, THE

Bandit of the Alps.

A ROMANCE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

By SOPHIA FRANCES,

AUTHOR OF VIVONIO, CONSTANCE DE LINDENSDORF, AND THE NUN OF MISERICORDIA.

"——————There is a power
Unseen that rules the illimitable world,
....
While man, who madly deems himself the lord
Of all, is nought but weakness and dependence."

Thoms

"He seemed for dignity composed,
And high exploit: but———"

Milton.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

Printed for HENRY COLBURN,

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LIBRARY, CONDUIT-STREET, BOND-STREET.

R. Clarke, Printer, Well-Street, Cripplegate.

ANGELO GUICCIARDINI.

CHAP. I.

FAITHFUL to the duteous promise she had given, Cecilia, for nearly two days, yielded obedience to the anxious injunctions of the signora. On the evening of the second the lovely girl was so far recovered as to be able to leave her bed; but although she had not, infringed the command to observe silence on agitating subjects, and forbore to entreat those explanations which she was so desirous of receiving, the restraint she suffered on the occasion was as painful as it was perceptible. During her illness she had seen no other persons than the signora and Guispardo; and now, as returning strength enabled her to move around the subterraneous chamber, every object she beheld served to increase her impatienee.

On this day, however, the signora seemed as little inclined to be communicative as she had been on the two preceding days; and Cecilia was on the point of once more

retiring to her couch, when an unusual bustle in the outward recesses of the cavern retarded her intention, and threw the signora into apparent alarm and astonishment.

Before either could express their surprise at the unexpected noise, or their desire to learn what had occasioned it, Angelo Guicciardini suddenly rushed in. Wild dismay, horror, and eager dread, marked his features, and trembled in his voice, as, earnestly glancing his eyes on Cecilia, he exclaimed: "Unfortunate girl! how hast thou dared to conceal from me that Orazio di Udina sought thee in the castle of Torcello?"

Unprepared for this singular accusation, shocked and astonished by the sudden and alarming appearance of Angelo, and the wild terror painted on the countenance of the signora, Cecilia had scarcely power to reply.

"I thought you were well acquainted with that circumstance. Ah, my mother! wherefore did you enjoin me to a silence which may have been productive of so much misfortune?"

"Was he still within the accursed walls of the castle on the night on which you left it?" demanded Angelo.

"Oh, no: he had fled from thence three days preceding."

"Then hope is not entirely lost," exclaimed Guicciardini, hastily retreating; yet ere he had reached the irregular arch

by which he had entered, he returned, and, again addressing Cecilia, added: "Yet, ere I go, inform me with the utmost brevity of all that passed between yourself and Orazio while he remained at the castle."

With tremulous haste, Cecilia now related the tale of Ursulina, the marchese's conduct, and every incident in which Orazio had been concerned, during his stay at the Castle di Torcello.

Deeply interested, intently earnest, Angelo listened in silence; yet his frequent starts, and the keen, significant glances with which he occasionally regarded the signora, evinced that the relation both astonished and enraged him.

When Cecilia ceased to speak, he stood motionless for a few minutes, as if absorbed in thought: then, starting from his reflective attitude, threw a glance of softened sadness on the lovely girl, and, addressing the signora, said:—

"This unlucky circumstance has deranged all my plan. I must now instantly fly, to frustrate the diabolic schemes of that execrable fiend. Do not attempt to undertake your journey till you shall hear from me. If I can discover that precipitate, unfortunate youth, all may yet be well; but should he already have added another victim to Rovenza's hellish malice——"

Angelo paused. The convulsive trembling of his voice, as he pronounced the

bare idea of Orazio's dreaded fate, struck on the beating heat of Cecilia like the icy shaft of death; and she fell, almost senseless, into the arms of the signora.

Deep and fearful were the execrations which now burst from the lips of the robber, as, gazing on the pale, lovely features of Cecilia, he vowed unceasing enmity to the race of Rovenza.

The penetrating tones of his awful accents recalled the fleeting senses of the beauteous girl; and, gliding from the supporting arms of the signora, she sunk at his feet, faintly articulating—"Oh, thou, whom I know not how to address—whether as a child I ought to supplicate for a paternal blessing, or else implore by that mysterious friendship which connects thee with all most dear to my soul—delay not one moment to compassionate my weakness, but haste to succour and protect him, upon whose safety my life depends."

"Ingenuous, amiable child!" exclaimed Angelo, gazing upon her with a look which spoke the fondest affection, and tenderly raising her from the ground: "Let hope sustain thee in this hour of trial, nor be thy prayers wanting for my success. Remember—Angelo Guicciardini swore to protect thee; and with life only can that sacred obligation end."

Once more he embraced the lovely form he supported, and resigning her to the arms of the signora, said, "Guispardo and eight chosen men will remain here.

In this intricate recess, that guard will prove sufficient. Should I triumph, you both, my valued treasures, will soon partake my joy. If I fall; expect an escort to conduct you to the last asylum which is then permitted you. Farewel."

Bending on the drooping mourners, his now faltering lips half pronounced a blessing on them both, and then, with eager haste, retreated from their view; and soon the distant sound of the bugle proclaimed the departure of himself and his chosen followers from the cave.

Cecilia still remained weeping on the signora's bosom who in vain, attempted to console her.

"Ah!" sighed the sorrowing girl, "you offer me consolation; yet you refuse to say whether that consolation is offered from a parent's lips. Say, am I not your child, the child of Angelo Guicciardini? If I am not, why are you here, and on these terms of intimacy with a man who is a robber?"

Wounded to the soul by the looks and language which suspensive despair had now impelled the ever-meek Cecilia to use, the signora was for some minutes destitute of power to reply; yet her look, so sadly and tenderly reproachful, sufficiently punished the artless object of her concern, when at length she said:

"That you are indeed my child, let my anxious cares, my never-failing affection, evince to you, Cecilia."

"And you are indeed the Countess di Mirandini?"

"I am."

"And I am not the child of Angelo Guicciardini?"

"Assuredly not."

"Nor——" The deepest blush of mingled grief and shame now dyed the cheek of the innocent girl.

The signora fully comprehended her meaning, and, in solemn accents, pronounced,

"No, nor the child of the abhorred De Weilburgh; you boast an unsullied claim to the name of Mirandini."

"Oh, abandoned, cruel Ursulina! what woe, what anguish, has thy falsehood made me suffer! Ah, my mother!" And again she fell at her feet. "Can'st thou pardon thy wretched child for having, even for a moment, believed so improbable, so hateful a tale? yet it was so artfully told."

Clasping her tenderly to her maternal bosom, the signora raised the trembling Cecilia, while she replied,

"Apparently improbable as was the tale you have heard, it is, nevertheless, strictly true, except in one instance; and that is, the artful concealment of your birth; for alas! it was the unfortunate orphan of Udina who accidentally perished by the hand of the ruffian, while heaven graciously preserved thee to be the blessing, the consolation of my closing days."

Cecilia wept convulsively.

"Grieve not thus violently, my dearest

child," continued the signora, "exert your reason to overcome this excess of sorrow. Our troubles may speedily terminate. Your yielding thus resistlessly to your feelings will retard your recovery, and prevent my entering upon the detail of some circumstances which I am now anxious to explain to you."

Cecilia, thus affectionately urged, made every possible effort to restrain her tears; and eager for the elucidation of some of those mysteries that had so long tortured her mind, she said---"And the Marchese di Rovenza, that cruel, hypocritical man, was in reality the cause of the brave, unfortunate Count di Udina's ruin---the destroyer of thine and my lamented father's happiness! At least, Angelo Guicciardini dreadfully affirmed so, even in Rovenza's presence."

"A discovery has recently been made, which seems to place the foul treachery of the Marchese di Rovenza beyond all doubt," returned the signora; "but on this subject I am not as yet fully capable of speaking, much being yet mysterious even to myself: for a clear explanation of this dark transaction, we must await the return of Angelo. But if my Cecilia could so far compose herself as to attend to the little narrative I am about to commence, it will unfold to her the nature of my connexion with, and obligations to Angelo Guicciardini."

With what grateful avidity Cecilia de-

clared herself sufficiently calm to listen with the most earnest attention to this long-desired explanation, may easily be imagined; and, after a short pause, the signora began as follows:

"I think, as well as I can recollect, that on the fatal day preceding the evening of our separation, I had entered on a brief relation of those events which led me to receive Orazio di Udina into our cottage, but had only time to inform you, that I once resided in Venice with one of my parents, when the unexpected arrival of the Signor Malvezzi prevented my proceeding in my narrative. It will now therefore be necessary to give a more circumstantial detail than I then intended to do.

"I am the only remaining survivor of the Bernini family, a house as illustrious in Tuscany for virtue as for power, wealth, and magnificence. My father, the last Count di Bernini, was as much distinguished for his political abilities as for the splendour in which he lived, and the private virtues which adorned his character. Some of the earlier years of his manhood were passed in the Austrian court; and it was at this period that he formed an indelible friendship with the Count de Weilburgh, the father of him to whom I owe so many of the sorrows of my life.

"The Count de Weilburgh was a character every way deserving the lively partiality which my father evinced for him on all possible occasions. His rank was noble,

but his possessions were not large, and therefore he chiefly retired to one of his estates, with his wife, two sons, and a young sister, equally conspicuous for her extreme beauty and the excellence of her mind. The lovely Hortensia (for so she was called) soon enslaved the heart of my father, and in a short time she became his wife. The friendship that subsisted between himself and the Count de Weilburgh was now further cemented by this tie, and for some years these friends alternately visited each other, whenever the political situations of the German and Italian states would permit of such journies in safety.

"Two years after the marriage of my parents I was born; but, alas! my birth produced not those pleasant sensations in their bosoms which would have attended the birth of a son. A male heir was a blessing which, however, my father was never destined to enjoy. Several more children crowned the union of my parents; but they were all females, and not one of these innocents survived the first stages of infancy. These repeated disappointments threw a gloom on my father's mind; but still he cherished me with the most paternal tenderness and affection, while by my mother I was idolized. This beloved parent I lost when I was scarcely twelve years old; and my father was so much attached to her memory, that he never regained the least portion of health or spirits after her decease. In order to alleviate his afflic-

tion, he soon visited Germany, and made me the companion of his journey. By his brother-in-law he was received with every consolatory attention, and in the protecting care of the amiable Count de Weilburgh, I found the irreparable loss of my lamented mother in some degree alleviated.

"In the Castle of Weilburgh both the count, my father, and myself continued for above three years; during which time I was contracted to Herman de Weilburgh, the eldest son of the count. I was at this period just turned of fifteen. Herman was not quite twenty: handsome in his person, apparently amiable in his manners, and perfectly well informed and accomplished. I considered him as I should a deserving brother, and looked forward to our intended nuptials with placid indifference; nor could all the ardour of attachment he professed for me inspire me with more animated sentiments.

"A few months prior to the time appointed for the celebration of my union with Herman de Weilburgh, some particular concern called my father to Venice; and, at my own earnest desire, he permitted me to accompany him thither, attended, however, by my lover.

"My father, being then personally unknown at Venice, placed me, for the time of his stay, in the Ursuline convent in which Helena and Veronica Loredana were educated. Helena was then absent

from the house, and on a visit with the signora her mother. During her absence, I contracted a friendship for the amiable Veronica, which time and misfortunes have had no power to end. Surely an intuitive presentiment whispered to our minds how nearly linked would be our fates, and bound us by more than common ties of affection to each other.

"After a residence of nearly six weeks in Venice, my father proposed to proceed to Padua, to visit a family with whom he had formed a pleasing intimacy soon after his arrival in Venice; and on this excursion I accompanied him with my governess, a very respectable young woman, who had resided with us from my earliest infancy, and from whose watchful care I had never been a moment absent.

"We were received by the family we visited in the most distinguished manner, and were entertained, during our stay, in a very sumptuous style. It was here that I first saw your father. My well-known engagement with the young Count de Weilburgh, who still followed me like my shadow, kept me free from the attentions of others; but, notwithstanding this, I too soon perceived that the Count di Mirandini regarded me with the tenderest sentiments; nor was I long in discovering that I esteemed him above all the men I had ever seen. I now shrunk from the idea of my nuptials with De Weilburgh, with a sense

of repugnance and disgust which I could not conquer.

"As soon as I had acquired this painful consciousness of the real situation of my heart, I became impatient to quit Padua, and even urged my father to return to Germany; but this inestimable parent, who had made very accurate observations on the mutual attachment which he had soon discerned between the Count di Mirandini and myself, and who was also extremely displeased with De Weilburgh for several dissipated, and even criminal acts which he had committed in Venice, had already privately resolved to annul his engagements with the latter, on account of his ill conduct, as soon as a convenient opportunity for so doing should occur.

"Thus determined, my father objected to quitting Padua for some time. Within three days after our conversation on the subject, I was most agreeably surprised by receiving a visit from the Signora Loredana and Helena, who came, they said, to thank me for the attentions I had paid Veronica, while residing with her in the convent; adding, to my extreme satisfaction, that she would herself be in Padua in a few days.

"The arrival of Veronica was expected by me with the utmost impatience; and at length I had the happiness of once more seeing this dear friend. It is true, I thought her sister very amiable; but I felt

not for her the same regard which I bore for Veronica. The similarity of our situations also attached us to each other; for she was contracted to a young man for whom she did not cherish one favourable sentiment. She had not, however, at this time beheld Costanza di Udina, and had therefore a heart at liberty to enjoy the pleasures of those magnificent galas and balls which prevailed in the splendid pallazo and gardens of the nobleman whose visitors we were. The last night that I beheld this beautiful young woman at that period, she was adorned with those very jewels which were presented to you by the Count Ferbonino. When next I saw her, alas! it was as the fugitive bride of the unhappy Costanza.

"But to return. The Signora Loredana and her daughter quitted Padua about a week before my father and myself. My parting with Veronica was the first truly wretched moment I had ever experienced in my life, except the death of my mother. A kind of foreboding horror seemed to forbid our tears to flow as we said to each other adieu, and certainly indicated the approaching sorrows in which we should be mutually involved.

"The day after the departure of the Loredanas, I received some degree of consolation for the loss of my friend, by my dear father informing me that, in consequence of his having ascertained that Herman de Weilburgh was pursuing the most

improper courses, he had written to the count his father a full relation of his conduct, and had therefore been under the necessity of declining the intended alliance. This most pleasing intelligence was followed by my father's ordering me to prepare for a journey into Tuscany, as he should not now think of returning into Germany. But, as if every wish of my soul was to be at this period gratified, no sooner did the Count di Mirandini learn that my engagements with Herman de Weilburgh were at an end, than he made proposals for me to my father, who immediately gave him permission to attend us into Tuscany, of which state he was a native, and had hereditary estates in and near Florence, and of which he had very lately taken possession, on the death of his father.

" The name of Di Mirandini was too illustrious not to render the idea of my union with the count extremely gratifying to my father; and, a short time after our return into Tuscany, I became the wife of Di Mirandini.

" My unexpected felicity was, however, soon interrupted by letters from Germany, announcing the death of the old Count de Weilburgh; and attributing his illness and dissolution to the effects which the knowledge of Herman's conduct, and the consequent annulling the contract that had subsisted between myself and his son, produced on his mind.

"My father grieved extremely at this event. A severe attack of a very serious complaint to which he was subject was the result of this unhappiness; and in less than a month after receiving the information of the Count de Weilburgh's death, he was no more."

"The tender affection of my beloved husband consoled me under this heavy affliction; and, grateful for his unvarying love, I had begun to feel the usual cheerfulness of my disposition return, when a letter from Costanza di Udina to my lord induced the latter to give him and Veronica a very earnest invitation into Tuscany. The dreadful events which marked the flight of these unfortunate lovers from Venice are, doubtless, already known to you, my dear child," said the signora, interrupting her own relation.

Cecilia replied in the affirmative, and informed her mother that she had received the melancholy recital of the story of the Udinas from the Signora della Albina.

"Then you certainly heard a correct detail," observed the signora, "for to that amiable woman did I confide an accurate account of every circumstance which occurred to my ruined friends during their stay in Tuscany. It is now then needless for me to repeat that the reception of Costanza di Udina and his Veronica was such as they had a right to expect from the friendship which both my lord and myself cherished for this unfortunate pair; or to

describe the horror and despair which seized Costanza on learning the dreadful circumstances that had attended his union with his adored Veronica; nor is there occasion for me to detail the sufferings which he experienced when rendered thus an outcast from his native home, his honours, and his princely possessions, he pined away three miserable years in the deep solitude of the lonely fortress in the Appennines; I shall therefore proceed to that period when the Count di Mirandini and myself removed for a short time from Florence to Venice, and the villa near Padua. You have already been informed of the astonishment and uneasiness which the sudden arrival of the Count and Countess di Udina, together with their infant son, and the two attendants who had resided with them in the fortress of Zamora, occasioned my lord and me to experience.

"This extraordinary and imprudent journey was undertaken by Costanza in consequence of his having received a letter from the Marchese di Rovenza, informing him, that having providentially discovered the place of his retreat, he had availed himself of that knowledge to acquaint him that a favorable opportunity existed for him to evince his innocence of the crimes imputed to him, as by a fortunate chance the agents he had employed on the occasion had privately secured the person of the discarded servant of the Signor Geronimo Ollivetto, and that this man had, in the

first moment of fear on being apprehended, confessed himself to have been the murderer of his master. The letter of Rovenza then continued to hint that Biondello could also probably explain those circumstances that involved the political character of Costanza, and urged the expediency of his personally standing forward in vindication of his own and his father's honour.

"This letter was written in the usual style of the marchese, but its plain simplicity seemed to evince the utmost sincerity. He certainly requested Udina to destroy it after reading it; but the substance was—'Come forward, my friend, and claim that restitution of honour and property which you have never really forfeited.'

"Many other arguments were used by the marchese, in order to draw the confiding, unsuspicious Costanza from his retreat; and at length he resolved to follow that advice which to his own generous and undesigning heart seemed dictated by the purest motives of gratitude and regard.

"Almost immediately on his arrival at our Paduan villa, the young Count di Udina gave this explanation of the cause of his precipitate journey to di Mirandini, who, however, could not view the conduct of Rovenza in the same favourable light that Costanza did. Allowing that the marchese was sincere, his advice was still to be considered as erroneous, and in consequence of this reflection, my husband

most strenuously recommended his friend to act with the utmost caution. Udina promised not to be precipitate, but would not admit into his noble mind one doubt of the sincerity of his artful cousin: the consequence was, that he soon fell into the snare laid to entrap him, and within a few days became a prisoner in the dungeon of St. Mark. In what manner this abominable stratagem was carried into ultimate effect is I believe still unknown to all but Rovenza and his agents: and thus the unfortunate Costanza became the victim of his own credulity, and, as it now appears, of the deep self-interest and malice of his hypocritical relation, the extent of whose villainy still remained unsuspected. The first positive intelligence which di Mirandini received of the arrest of his friend was given to him in an anonymous letter, in which he was also most earnestly advised to seek his own safety in immediate flight, as the enemies of Udina had contrived to implicate him in the imputed guilt of his undone friend. But too certain that the foes of Costanza would indeed endeavour to ruin the man who had so long sheltered the object of their hatred from destruction, my lord immediately determined to fly from the Venetian states, and accordingly set off within a few hours after receiving the friendly letter, and took with him the young Orazio. The melancholy events that followed his departure you are no stranger to, my dear, and therefore, passing over all

repetitions of the sufferings of the poor Veronica, on discovering the truth of her husband's and her own awful situation, and her removal in a state of insanity from my villa, I shall proceed to inform you wherefore I myself soon after departed, and with her infant daughter, without acquainting the Marchese di Rovenza with my intentions. A few days only had elapsed after Veronica's removal, when I received by a private messenger a few lines from your father, directing me to set out for the place where he concealed himself in the neighbourhood of the cottage in the Milanese, and where he should be ready to meet me at a specific time, and strictly charging me to bring with me if possible the wife and infant daughter of his friend. To make Veronica the companion of my journey was utterly out of my power: her derangement and residence in the Villa di Rovenza rendered such a scheme wholly impracticable. To take the child with me was, however, by no means difficult; and I commenced my journey with all possible expedition, carefully observing to follow the route which my lord had appointed me to pursue, in order to reach them in safety.

"Security and hope seemed to attend me on this journey, till, on the second day of our entering the Milanese, we encountered the accident related to you by the base Ursulina, of whose real disposition and unsteady principles I had not at that time the

most remote suspicion. Yet, what will my artless and inexperienced Cecilia conceive of the sly depravity of man, when I inform her that Herman de Weilburgh was the contriver of the apparent accident which befell us in crossing the Secchia, and that design, not chance, brought him to our aid at the moment when he so opportunely presented himself. The barque in which we passed over the river was designedly stranded on the opposite shore to that which we had left; and while shuddering in dismay at our fancied danger, drenched by the surf, and seemingly destitute of all hope of relief, the sudden appearance of the young Count de Weilburgh, with two attendants following, was hailed by us all with that degree of hope and pleasure which the idea of succour and safety naturally inspires. It is true, an involuntary repugnance to receiving the services of him whom my father had pronounced abandoned and unprincipled, certainly agitated my mind at the moment; yet, not once harbouring the suspicion that artful premeditation and successful villainy had brought him to our relief, I resigned myself and my affrighted attendants to his care. We were then immediately conducted to the recluse villa, in which, as Ursulina truly informed you, I continued a prisoner for nearly three years, and where you, my Cecilia, after my residing there about seven months, entered the world."

The signora now paused a moment, and, embracing her daughter, shed tears of enanguished recollection and then, in a less agitated tone, proceeded.

"On my first entering the villa, Herman informed me that it was the hunting seat of a friend, who permitted him to occupy it at his pleasure; and therefore I was not surprised at finding a supper speedily prepared, and every possible accommodation for myself and my women. Had I, however, been disposed to suspicious observation, I was so ill through fatigue and fright, and so much afflicted by the death of the only male servant who had attended me in my journey, and who, I was cautiously informed, had perished in endeavouring to save some articles of value from the boat just after we had quitted it, that I was incapable of attending to the singularity of my situation. For two or three days, I continued too much indisposed to be able to leave my room; but when I did so, what a scene of iniquity was opened to my astonished view! The impetuous Herman no sooner found me capable of listening to him, than he daringly unfolded to me the whole of the plan he had so successfully laid to destroy my peace and my fame; and I too late perceived I had been made the victim of his art. With an unblushing effrontery, which evinced at once his ungovernable passion and his determined malice, he told me, that from the instant when my father had deprived him of every

hope of calling me his wife, he had resolved to watch for the most favourable opportunity of obtaining possession of my person. 'But,' continued this monster of depravity, 'your husband, your Di Mirandini, was too foolishly fond and careful to permit me to put any of my designs into execution; and had it not been for his ridiculous friendship for Udina, all my hopes might have failed. Fortunately I was at Venice at the lucky moment when, deserted and unfriended, you were left to struggle with affliction, and to undertake a long and dangerous journey without proper protection. By bribing one of your domestics, I easily obtained information of your actions; and three days before the billet from your husband reached you, it was in my possession. Thus acquainted with your intended route, I had little doubt of securing you; but, as if fate had ordained that you should absolutely be mine, I had also to congratulate myself on being acquainted with a Modenese, who, from being largely in my debt, could not well refuse any reasonable request I should make. The person to whom I allude was the owner of this villa, which has ever been a residence devoted to pleasure. This house I had visited in company with its master some years back, and knowing that it was always inhabited and in repair, and fortunately so situated as to favour my designs, I instantly purchased it for a sum much above its intrinsic value indeed; but the

dwelling was inestimable to me as a retreat where I could hide from the world the treasure which it now contains. I have been thus ingenuous and explicit with you,' added this abominable young man, ' in order to prove to you that you have no hope of escaping me. I will take no unmanly, despicable advantage of the defenceless situation to which you are reduced; but should you resolve to treat me with coldness or scorn, you will remain here a prisoner for life.'

"Much more was urged by the cruel and abandoned Herman. Need I relate my amazement—my despair at this discovery of the snare into which I had been entrapped. For two months, I was in a state bordering upon insanity; and when I did recover my reason in some degree, it was only to feel the misfortunes into which I was plunged with renewed anguish of heart. I should soon be a mother: the offspring of my beloved Mirandini was likely to see the light in that abode of infamy in which I was entombed alive. Nothing could exceed the grief and horror which this idea gave me, till, in a short time time, I was informed by De Weilburgh that my husband was no more. To this intelligence I was, however, for some time incredulous; but my doubts were at length ended by another confession from Herman, and of such a nature as made me more than ever abhor him. ' The servant whom you supposed to have been drowned

just after you landed here,' said he, with a coolness which would have more than disgraced a savage, 'I privately sent to meet your lord at the place where he waited to receive you; and the fellow executed his commission so well, that the foolish Di Mirandini believed a feigned tale of your having been lost, together with your female attendants, and your little orphan *protegeé*; and as he was wandering in a fit of despair among the rocks near the retreat he had provided for you as a temporary residence, was attacked by a small party of banditti, and slain. You are free therefore to become my wife, and provided you give me your hand, and thus enable me to claim the Tuscan estates which are your own right, I will instantly restore you to liberty and the world.'

"This proposal, so cruel, so insulting, at such a dreadful moment, gave a fearful conviction to my mind that my lord was indeed no more. For some months my mental sufferings were greater than I can describe. The first beam of consolation that shone on my chilled heart was thy birth, Cecilia, and in all the tender cares, the fond feelings of a mother, I lost some of the poignancy of my affliction. Yet while I detail the faults and vices of De Weilburgh, still let me do justice to other parts of his conduct. He indeed kept me a prisoner—he spoke unceasingly to me of his attachment, but he never offered me the slightest personal insult; and every accom-

modation, even amounting to luxury, which he could procure for me, he never failed to do; but above all, the attention which he paid to thy wants, and those of the infant Veronica, highly gratified me, till I fully comprehended his motive for so doing, which, at length, with the accustomed candour which he affected to treat me with, he fully revealed to me himself, by informing me that he had hitherto testified as much regard as possible for every object which he had perceived was dear to me, in the hope of effecting some pleasing alteraien in my sentiments, but that, as he daily observed that I was obstinately determined to remain insensible to all his efforts to win my affections, he should soon cease every attempt of the kind, and remove the children from the villa.

"This frightful threat subdued me into something like complacency; and, for nearly a year and a half, I struggled with my fate, till at length Providence pleased to release me, in innocence and safety, from this eccentric yet systematic dissembler. The circumstance to which I allude was as follows. The nurse of the young Veronica was one evening walking with her young charge in a small enclosed garden belonging to the villa, when she suddenly perceived a man peeping over the top of the high wall. Fearing no danger, she approached and enquired what he wanted. In reply, he asked her whether

she belonged to the Countess di Mirandini. The good young woman, inspired by a presentiment of hope, instantly answered in the affirmative, and implored the stranger to declare his errand. He then dropped a letter at her feet, and desired her to carry it unopened to me, and to bring an answer to the same spot on the following evening, if she could do so with safety.

"This letter was soon delivered into my hands. It contained but a few lines, briefly informing me, that if I wished to escape from my irksome and disgraceful prison, I should be furnished with every means of so doing, and conveyed to the convent of Santa Benedicta, amid the Appennines of the Modenese, where I should remain till a secret friend, much interested for my happiness, could procure for me a secure retreat.

"With what emotions of devout gratitude to the Most High, I instantly resolved to avail myself of this providential opportunity of flying from my persecuting enthraller, I believe I need not say. Suffice it, that I wrote an assenting answer to my unknown friend, and in two days afterwards received another billet, directing me to be, with my servants, in the garden at midnight, where I should find every thing which was requisite to assist my flight.

"To obey the directions contained in the billet, I well knew, would not be very difficult. The Count de Weilburgh had

been absent above a fortnight, and was not to return in less than six weeks. A man who acted in the capacities of steward and butler, and the gardener, with one female servant, were the only domestics in the villa; and, during the frequent excursions of De Weilburgh, they were usually so much occupied by their own amusements, and confided so blindly in the strength of the walls, that they gave themselves very little trouble to watch my actions: accordingly I found no interruption, when, with thee, my Cecilia, in my arms, and followed by the nurse of the infant Veronica, and Ursúlina, I stole at midnight to the appointed spot. Here we found a man stationed with a ladder, and, by the assistance which he in silence afforded us, we all passed over the lofty wall. He quickly followed, and hurried us to the side of the unfrequented road, which lay a few paces from the villa, and here we found a covered carriage in waiting. As I ascended the vehicle, I ventured to ask our hitherto silent guide, to whom I was indebted for my deliverance. With brief civility, he replied, that I should learn that when I arrived at the place of my destination; and then begging me not to give myself any further uneasiness or concern on the subject, and to rely upon his care, he closed the door of the carriage, and flew to give directions to the drivers. But it is not necessary to detail the particulars of a journey which, although it lasted three days,

was yet pursued in uninterrupted safety, and terminated happily, in the sweet and tranquil convent of Santa Benedicta, where the most amiable sisterhood in the world devote themselves alike to the service of heaven, and occupy their every moment which is spared from religious exercise in efforts to relieve the necessities of the poor of the few wretched hamlets scattered in the wild vicinity of their house.

"On my introduction to the venerable abbess, I was received with all the respect due to my rank, and all the benevolent consolations which the afflicted claim from the truly good; and now, for the first time, I learned that I was indebted to the Marchesa di Rovenza for my enlargement from the vile state of captivity in which I had so long been held, and for the respectable and happy asylum which the convent of Santa Benedicta afforded me.

"My indescribable astonishment at this intelligence was suffered to subside in some degree, ere the abbess presented me a letter from the marchesa herself. This epistle breathed all that spirit of meek goodness, sympathy, and friendship, of which the heart of the admirable writer is capable. She excused herself from acquainting me in what manner she had discovered my unhappy situation, but informed me, as undoubted facts, that my husband had perished by the hands of banditti; that no intelligence could be obtained as to where he had placed the young Orazio di Udina;

that I was supposed by all my friends to be no more; and that Herman de Weilburgh had taken possession of all my hereditary estates in Tuscany, on producing a will made by the count my father, which proved him entitled to claim those possessions, in case of the demise of my husband, provided we left no lineal heir. After endeavouring to soften this intelligence, the marchesa advised me to act with the utmost caution, in case I should resolve to appeal to the laws of my country against the base Herman, who, she declared, would certainly make every possible attempt to prove my child illegitimate, and myself an abandoned being, who had lived with him a voluntary life of infamy. As to the estates of my husband, those, she said, had been sold by an agent, a short time after Di Mirandini had been obliged to fly from Venice, and suggested that most probably the sums produced by their sale had been placed in a foreign bank, and could only be claimed by the order or will of my lord.

"This afflicting detail of the state of my affairs was closed with an earnest recommendation to me not to venture from my retreat, nor attempt any contention with the wretch who so falsely held the property of myself and my hapless child, till I had given every possible consideration to the best means to be adopted on the occasion, and till some powerful friends could be interested in my behalf.

"To me, who well foreboded that even

my life, or the life of my infant, could not be secure from the machinations of the detestable De Weilburgh, this advice seemed as just and reasonable as benevolent; and therefore I immediately determined to follow it; especially as the marchesa assured me of her continued friendship, and solemnly promised to interest herself in every possible opportunity of serving my cause.

"To remain in the quiet convent of Santa Benedicta, at least till I should again hear from my friend, and receive her promised advice as to my future proceedings, was my only resource—a resource of which I availed myself with unfeigned satisfaction. I had still some very valuable jewels in my possession, and which I had ever carefully concealed from De Weilburgh. These now presented me the means of living independently, although but poorly; and, by the sale of them, which the abbess reluctantly procured to be negociated for me at Leghorn, I realised a sum larger than I had expected; and thus I resolutely avoided for a time all further pecuniary services from the amiable marchesa. Tranquil and secure, however, as was my situation in the convent, still the dreaded future [illegible] to my anticipating fears, arrayed in a thousand terrors; and when I gazed on thee, my child, and considered thee as the heiress of large possessions, yet despoiled of thy just inheritance—myself outcast and degraded—my name but too probably stig-

matized in the vilest manner, and devoid of all means of contending with my cruel, artful foe, I was scarcely able to bear the harrowing conviction of my miseries. The repining spirit which I thus indulged, while forgetful of that benignant power that had so mercifully released me from the vile De Weilburgh, was soon justly punished. Six months after my entering the convent of Santa Benedicta, I received another letter from the Marchesa di Rovenza; and the information which it contained plunged me into the utmost astonishment and distress. Judge how great my surprise and grief must have been, when I tell thee, my child, that the marchesa informed me, that soon after my flight from the villa in which he had confined me, he immediately publicly avowed my being still in existence, and employed agents throughout the different Italian states to secure my person, and proving his right to do so by producing unquestionable testimony of my being lawfully united to him. This conduct, however, had excited no small degree of curiosity and interest at Florence, and De Weilburgh's first claims to my hereditary estates were investigated; in consequence of which the count had, with well-managed artifice, related a tale that effectually imposed upon the investigators of the affair, and put a stop to all further examination. After bringing two or three witnesses to prove that I had formed a secret connexion with him, even

while living with my husband at Venice and near Padua, and that I had gladly availed myself of the misfortunes of Di Mirandini to follow the career of pleasure with my lover, and had voluntarily secluded myself with him in the villa in the Modonese, he proceeded to make affirmation, that you, my child, were the fruit of our illicit connexion, and were born before he was acquainted with the death of my husband; but that, immediately on his obtaining a knowledge of that mournful event, he had proposed to me to make me his wife—a proposal which he also affirmed I had most joyfully accepted, on which we were immediately married in a private manner in the church of a convent near the villa in which he secluded me. The certificates of our pretended union he then produced, and made a second claim to my estates as my husband. A priest solemnly swore that he had married us; and two witnesses, the one a brother of the community, the other the count's confidential valet, then came forward, and positively swore to the marriage. To be brief, my dear Cecilia, the testimonies which De Weilburgh brought forward on this occasion were pronounced by the judges true and indisputable; and he was formally invested with legal powers to retain my estates, and to secure my person wherever he could find me.

"I will make no observations on the sufferings I endured from the shock which I

experienced from this dreadful intelligence. Suffice it, that I felt convinced that my ruin was now completed, and that you, my child, were deprived of even your maternal inheritance. In what manner De Weilburgh had contrived to effect this horrible piece of injustice, I have never been able to discover; yet I imagine he must really have formed an union with some wretched being, whom he had hired to personate me: else I think it would have been impossible for him to have procured such proofs of my being his wife as those which he brought forward on the trial. At all events, it was sufficiently evident to me, from the peculiarity of my misfortunes (that is, my having resided so long in a house belonging to him, and the colour given to your birth), that all the feeble attempts I could use to invalidate the seeming facts he had proved, would be equally dangerous and useless to me; and at length I perceived that I had no alternative but really to become the wife of this cruel being, or to hide myself for life in the utmost obscurity. The tender remembrance which I still cherished for my beloved, lamented Di Mirandini—the consciousness that I could not benefit thee by such a hateful union, determined me to bury myself for ever from the world—a world so unpitying, so misjudging, so easily deceived by fallacious appearances. This resolve, as soon as I was so far recovered from the shock which the marchesa's

letter had given me, I wrote and informed her of. Her reply was dictated by unfeigned interest and concern in my fate. She lamented the unavoidable necessity to which I had been compelled to yield, and advised me by no means to think of entering on a monastic life, or of devoting my child to a religious seclusion, lest some fortunate means of reinstating ourselves in our rights might yet occur, and cause me to regret that it was no longer in my power to avail myself of them. This amiable woman then proposed to secure for me a safe retreat in any spot which I might chuse for my future residence. This generous proposal I immediately accepted, and entreated that, if possible, a cottage might be obtained for me on the banks of the Lago Maggiore, near the place where thy regretted father lost his life. This idea, so mournful, yet so soothing to my sad heart, now became the most earnest wish of my soul; and in anticipating the melancholy yet pious employ of weeping daily near the rocky recesses where Mirandini perished, I looked forward with the most anxious impatience for the reply of the marchesa. At length it arrived; and I learnt that nearly two years must elapse before I could be accommodated to my wish, when, at the expiration of that time, a cottage, exactly in the place which I wished to inhabit, would be ready for my reception.

"Those two years, rendered so tedious, so irksome, by the impatient expectation of

my heart, were scarcely passed away, when I received the long-wished-for letter, which informed me that my future residence was prepared for me, and that I might commence my journey as soon as the person appointed to conduct me to my humble home should arrive at the convent. Within two days after my receiving this pleasing letter, my promised conductor arrived. Oh! judge my surprise and emotion, when I beheld in him an old domestic whom I well remembered to have seen in the household of an ancient castle belonging to my deceased husband: it was Guispardo. The good old man, grieved and afflicted when he received information of the misfortunes of my lord and myself, had travelled from Tuscany to Venice, and on his fidelity and attachment being evinced to the Marchesa di Rovenza, she had secretly employed him as her agent in all her generous efforts to serve me. From Guispardo I learnt, however, that the marchese was entirely unacquainted with the proceedings of his lady relative to me; and that she had thought proper to hold him in ignorance of the interest she felt for me, in consequence of his entertaining a mistaken friendship for the vile de Weilburgh, who was frequently at Venice, and had contrived to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of the marchese by the most deceptive and insinuating manners. This part of Guispardo's intelligence gave me no small share of un-

easiness, till the good old man faithfully assured me that I had no present cause for apprehension, as the Count de Weilburgh had been some time absent in Germany, and that he would never think of seeking me in the spot which, as the scene of my husband's death, he would naturally suppose I would rather avoid than chuse for the place of my residence. Guispardo then informed me that every thing would be ready for my departure in the course of two days; and hinted that it would be advisable not to acquaint my female attendants with the name of the marchesa as my friend, and that he himself was to attend me on my journey, as a person appointed for that purpose by the Abbess of the Convent of Santa Benedicta.

"This intimation to conceal from my two attendants that it was the Marchesa di Rovenza I was indebted for my safety, and the share of peace which I enjoyed, together with the precaution Guispardo wished to use respecting his having formerly belonged to my lord, rendered me suspicious of the fidelity of Ursulina, and from this moment I would have observed her carefully prior to my journey, had not the sudden illness and death of Laurina prevented my so doing, and obliged me to depend so particularly on the former for the care of the children. This duty, however, she fulfilled with the utmost attention and exactitude during the journey, and for some short time after we were

settled in the cottage, I did not perceive any thing reprehensible in her behaviour."

CHAP. II.

"It was not till some days after my arrival at the cottage, and when I had somewhat recovered the fatigue of my journey, that poor Guispardo disclosed to me the secret communication with the caverns beneath its scite, or revealed to me that the little edifice had been erected, expressly for my accommodation, at the expence of the generous Marchesa di Rovenza, who, aware of my mournful desire of pouring out my grief amid those dark recesses where my di Mirandini died, had also directed the construction of the communication with the caverns; at the remote extremity of which, a plain marble tomb marks the exact spot where my lord was supposed to have fallen by the hands of the banditti. I shall pass over the recital of the anguished emotions with which I, for some time, nightly visited that silent cenotaph, till the entreaties and representations of my good Guispardo recalled me to the necessity of properly arranging the affairs of my little household.

"Convinced that attention to my children (I say children, my Cecilia, because I considered the young Veronica almost as dear to me as thyself), and my domestic

concerns, was a duty, from the fulfilment of which the most salutary effects might be produced; I exerted myself on the occasion, and soon had cause to perceive that Ursulina became negligent, indolent, and inattentive. When reproved for this alteration in her conduct, she at first endeavoured to repair her fault; but by degrees relapsed into carelessness; and, at length, with an apparent candour which I could not condemn, confessed that she could not any longer endure the mournful and secluded life which we led in the cottage; and that she truly wished to return to those gay scenes, in which she had passed even her earliest days. To argue with, or attempt to convince, obstinate ignorance of its error, is frequently ridiculous, and almost always useless, especially where the heart is secretly depraved. Yet I endeavoured to reconcile Ursulina to her situation, and in order to lessen her work, and give her mind some new occupation, I took our good Lodelli into the cottage: but Ursulina still continued refractory to my wishes, till the dreadful accident of the traveller's being murdered near the mouth of the cave, and my reception of his wounded servant into the cottage, gave a new turn to her manners. The impression which this murder made upon my mind, was as violent as might be expected. I remembered the fate of my husband, and caused every possible enquiry to be made after the assassins of the stranger, but

without success; and I succoured his wounded servant with all the care and attention that I could exert.

"You already know that this man conceived a partiality for Ursulina, and proposed to marry her, to which I consented, on his assuring me that he had formerly lived in the service of the cardinal, in Florence: nor are you ignorant, my dear Cecilia, that on the night preceding the morning on which those humble nuptials were to be solemnized, the infant Veronica was murdered in my arms, and that the robber, who thus broke into my peaceful cot, also despoiled me of the very few jewels I had retained when I sold the most valuable while at the convent of Santa Benedicta. It is probable, however, that this monster would not have murdered the unfortunate child, had not its loud cries alarmed him with the fear of detection; for he made not the least attack upon my life, nor thine. This horrible event drove me half distracted, as Ursulina informed you. But no sooner were the remains of the little Veronica consigned to the grave, than my unfaithful attendant displayed renewed anxiety to leave me, and, in a few days afterwards, married and quitted me for ever: but not before she had sworn the most solemn and awful vow never to reveal, even to her husband, who I really was. When Ursulina was gone, my reflections upon her ingratitude, and want of attachment to me, made me resolve

rather to endure the domestic inconveniences to which her loss exposed me, than introduce into my cottage another servant who might prove equally devoid of affection and fidelity. In a very short time, I had cause to rejoice in my determination; the docility, alacrity, ready comprehension, and good temper of my poor Lodelli, soon rendering her every thing I could wish, while I found that my own exertions contributed to the recovery of my health, and prevented my mind from sinking into that imbecile state, which the indulgence of excessive grief seldom fails to produce.

"It was at this period that the father Ascollini became a frequent visitor at the cottage; and I found the good sense and apparent piety, which he then displayed, of infinite service in soothing my affliction, and reconciling me to the decrees of providence. Indeed, so much had the father prepossessed me in his favour, that I should, in all probability, soon have entrusted him with my real history, had not a letter from the Marchesa di Rovenza most earnestly cautioned me not to place any confidence, on that subject, in the prior, who, although by no means what might be called a bad man, was nevertheless, but too much inclined to the vice of avarice, and, should occasion offer, might be induced to betray my secret.

"With this caution, this admirable friend likewise directed me to intimate to the father that, although I thought proper

to educate my child myself, she would most probably be devoted to take the veil when at a certain age: in which case, her dower would be considerable, and that the sums bestowed for charitable purposes at the time of her profession could not be trifling.

"This letter was brought to me by the Signor Malvezzi, or, as he is truly named, the good Merchant Corvino:—a man whose integrity and honour were so well ascertained by the marchesa, that he was her secret agent in every benevolent purpose which she formed to serve the unfortunate without the knowledge of her lord, whose acts of charity, although not ostentatious, were generally the effect of design of one kind or the other. This was a trait in the marchese's character which I learned from Corvino; for the estimable Helena's pen never once recorded to me the errors of her husband, to whom, indeed, she ascribed many virtues, to which it is now but too evident he is a stranger.

"The sale of my jewels had procured me a small annuity, but this was so insufficient for our support, that I was compelled to accept an annual sum from the generous marchesa, who could not be prevailed upon to withdraw it, even when she knew that the death of her niece deprived me of every claim to her assistance.

"Once in two years I then did, as you will know, my child, receive a visit from the Signor Malvezzi; and my time glided

on in undisturbed seclusion, till about the period of Orazio di Udina's entering our cottage. A week prior to this event, as I was one evening, according to my usual custom, walking alone and meditating in the most retired part of the garden, the noble form of Angelo Guicciardini, who was at this time utterly unknown to me, stood suddenly before me. In the first moment of my surprise, I was about to fly from this awful looking stranger, when his deeply-penetrating voice pronounced :—

"'Let not the Countess di Mirandini fly from the man who reveres, and is devoted to the service of the oppressed and unfortunate, and whose arm is only raised against pride and injustice.'

"To hear my name from the lips of this singular unknown, was enough to have rivetted me to the spot on which I stood, yet when his impressive accents warned me to remain, I involuntarily retired a few paces. He advanced some steps to meet me, and, by the clear evening light, I perceived an expression of animated satisfaction brighten his features.

"After a momentary pause, he said,—'My sudden appearance, and singular address, have doubtless astonished and alarmed you, lady, but you have nothing to fear from me; rather to hope, I trust—provided you can so far quell the weak timidity of your sex, as to grant the request I am here to make.'

"The earnest, anxious, penetrating

glance, with which the stranger regarded me as he spoke, and the look of doubt and uneasiness that marked his countenance, as he paused to receive my reply, evinced at once the importance of his errand, and his dread that my fears would prevent my complying with his demand.

" I observed him a moment in silent, scrutinizing apprehension, and then said, That I must first be informed as to the nature of the request he desired to make, ere I could give a decisive reply.

" Dare you meet me at midnight in the northern extremity of the cavern, for at the tomb of your husband only can I reveal the mystery which has brought me hither.' returned the unknown, in a voice so solemn and mournful, that my imagination almost suggested that I was conversing with a spirit of the dead.

" An impulse, powerfully irresistible, inclined me to give an instantaneous assent to this singular request, yet the tremor of my frame was so great, that I had not power to reply, till he once again demanded, whether I durst meet him at the appointed place and hour.

" Who art thou, most mysterious of human beings?' I now faintly articulated.

" Again the stranger viewed me with the look of penetrating anxiety—' Canst thou imagine, lady, that I should discover myself to one who has so little confidence in my honour, as to fear to meet me in that

drear recess, where the shade of the murdered friend of the unfortunate hovers to protect thee?'

"This allusion to my ever-mourned Mirandini;—the look,—the manner of the stanger as he spoke, combined to impart to my agitated soul a degree of enthusiastic courage, and I now unhesitatingly replied—

"At midnight expect me, as thou desirest, at the tomb of Mirandini.'

"Be this the remembrance of thy promise—the surety of thy safety,' returned the stranger, and hastily presenting me a brilliant cross, he vanished amid the thick almond trees that overshadowed the walk.

"For a moment, I stood immovable and entranced in amazement by the suddenness and singularity of the incident, and might have supposed that it had been a temporary vision of the brain, had not my eyes been rivetted on the cross which I now held in my hand, and which, with emotions such as no language can describe, I recognized as one formerly given to me by my lamented lord.

"This discovery almost deprived me of animation, and a thousand vague and strange ideas crowded upon my mind:—yet suffice it, that, after some short time given to reflection, I became convinced that the stranger must have known my husband; and in my anxiety to behold him once more, to hear the important mystery which I could now no longer doubt he had

to impart, I lost all sense of the terror, which the idea of keeping the appointment I had so precipitately made, might have otherwise occasioned me.

" At length the ardently wished for midnight hour arrived. Silence and repose reigned throughout the cottage, and, with an eager, palpitating heart, I descended into the caverns.—How I reached the northern extremity I scarcely know, for my agitated, pre-occupied mind, rendered me insensible of the obstacles that hitherto impeded my steps amid the rough intricacies of its windings—Yet, ah! when the dim rays of my lamp gleamed on the pale marble of the tomb of Mirandini, and my eyes encountered the dark figure of the stranger, mournfully bending over that sad memorial of my husband's fate,—how deep—how unutterable were my emotions! Perception had almost failed me, when the unknown, suddenly spriuging forward, saved me from falling, and supported me to the steps which surrounded the tomb: those steps on which I had so often knelt through the long night, to weep and supplicate heaven for the eternal repose of my beloved.

" As reviving animation permitted me again to distinguish where I was, I heard the voice of the stranger consoling me in the mellowed accents of sympathy.

" You weep for the dead who rest in peace; and whom the arrow of affliction, and the oppression of dishonour, can no

longer reach.—Oh! rather teach thy heart to feel with keenest sensibility the woes of those who scarcely know, in all creation's wide expanse, one heart that comprehends their misery, or eyes that weep in sorrow for their fate.'

"The thrilling tone in which the stranger spoke, penetrated my soul: it was that tone which betrays the most exquisite pang of mental agony. No longer selfishly grieved, I turned my eyes on him with the gaze of pity and anxious scutiny, while, tremulously, I faltered—

"Ah! say then, who are those unknown and afflicted ones who are thus lamentably desolate, yet seek a compassionating heart to repose their sorrow with, and eyes to shed the tear of sympathy for their misfortunes?'

"The stranger stood with folded arms beside the tomb, against which I half supported myself, and his looks were bent on me with an expression, which though undefinable to me, agitated me to excess, while in a suppressed and broken voice, he slowly uttered—

"Can Hortensia di Mirandini ask that harrowing question, and yet know that the son of Udina still exists, an exiled outcast?'

"Not all the powers of eloquence combined could convey an idea of the wild emotions of astonishment, fear and joy, which I now experienced. In breathless accents, I demanded an explanation.

"Did not the letter which you received

hree days back afford you every explanation that you can require?' earnestly asked the stranger.

"After a pause of renewed surprise, I declared that I had received no letter at the time alluded to.

"The stranger started and appeared to be much agitated, but, at length, he said—

"Then all is yet a mystery to you, lady. —There is some mistake: the messenger may have met with some unavoidable accident,'—He then murmured to himself, and again addressing me, he added, 'Yes, the son of the ruined and disgraced house of Udina still lives. Adorned by every virtue, every noble quality that can add lustre to a princely rank, this unfortunate youth lives, an alien from his name and country, a dependant on the bounty of a robber, of the bandit Angelo Guicciardini!'

"Trembling, dismay and horror shook my frame, and my palsied lips refused to reply to these dreadful words. The wild emotions which seemed struggling in the manly breast of the stranger now seemed to elate his form above the human height; and fury, almost phrenetic, flashed from his full dark eyes, while, in loud and piercing tones, he exclaimed—

"Start you in shuddering terror at this fact? recoil you from the branded name of the robber Angelo? Oh! rather join in heartfelt execrations on that world where blind injustice reigns supreme, where

innocence sinks beneath the lash decreed to guilt; while the brazen tongue of calumny proclaims aloud wide spreading falsehood, to overpower the feeble, unavailing cry of the victim, silences men's consciences with the alarum of self interest, and bars the gates of charity on the injured and oppressed! No, lady, no, turn ye not away in horror from the name of him, who has sworn on the altars of friendship and of vengeance, to know no guide but truth and justice, and who never yet despoiled the friendless, unprotected poor, of the hard-earned fruits of persevering industry—the support which should sustain them in the afflicting hours of sickness, pain and sorrow.'

" Deeply impressed upon my memory, by the emotions which it excited, is this speech. I gazed on the stranger with feelings undefinable even to myself. His high-sounding voice, which vibrated on my heart; his animated and keenly expressive looks and gestures; the love of virtue which beamed even through the sophistry of his exculpation of the robber, all combined to reveal to me the truth, and I felt that, in this extraordinary unknown, I beheld Angelo Guicciardini!——

" In the deep pause that followed when he ceased to speak, I raised my eyes to his, and ventured to pronounce his name.

" He started, gazed on me for an instant with a look of untold meaning, and then with a sigh more deep and heartfelt than

common sensibility could breathe, walked abruptly away.

"Within a few moments, he returned. An entire alteration had taken place in his looks and manner; the outward placidity, which heavy mental affliction ofttimes assumes, seemed to give composure to his countenance and air. He leaned mournfully on the side of the tomb, and, in an apparently unagitated voice, said—

"I am gratified, lady, to find that your discernment has spared me the pain of revealing to you, with my own lips, that with the robber Angelo you now hold converse."

"Although prepared for this acknowledgment, it threw me into renewed agitation, but sensible that to betray my feelings, would only be to again irritate those of this singular man, I suppressed, as much as possible, all appearance of emotion, and with assumed composure, articulated :—

"It is then to inform me that Orazio di Udina lives, that you have thus mysteriously sought me?'

"It is to claim for him that warmth of noble friendship which you bore his parents, which you have already manifested towards one of the hapless orphans of Udina,' returned the robber.

"Ah! what proofs of friendship that an unfortunate like myself can bestow, could be refused to this hapless youth?' I replied, with a degree of animation and quickness which evinced my sincerity.

"Angelo averted his face, as if to con-

ceal the emotion with which my manner inspired him, and then in softened tones he said, " This young man has providentially obtained some proofs that his father suffered guiltlessly ; and aided by the support of a friend endowed with virtue and rank, there exists a possibility that he may yet succeed in restoring the ancient honour of his house, the recovery of his birth-right, and above all in the vindication of him, whose exalted friendship for the ruined Costanza, doomed him to a life of lingering sufferings, of separation from a lovely and virtuous wife whom he idolized, and whose supposed death induced him to seclude himself for ever from a world, which had no longer a single claim on his affections.'

" The pointed significance with which Angelo spoke, his visible agitation, and the mysterious import of the words which he now uttered, raised a thousand strange and bewildering ideas in my mind, and, in the wildest perturbation, I demanded an explanation.

" With brevity and feeling, he then cautiously disclosed to me that my di Mirandini had lived many years after he had been supposed to have fallen by the hands of the banditti near the cave.

" Imagine, my child, what where my sensations on this discovery: they were so violent that they overpowered my senses and I fainted.

" On recovering I perceived Angelo still

beside me, and endeavouring to recall me to animation. When I had power once more to speak, I eagerly asked a thousand questions relative to my beloved lord.

"Angelo then informed me that on Di Mirandini's abruptly flying from Padua, he had journeyed with all possible caution and speed towards Switzerland, meaning to pass by Mount St. Gothard into the interior of the canton of Zurich; but being taken ill at an obscure cottage in the Milanese, not far distant from the one we occupied on the banks of the Lago Maggiore, had been confined there by his indisposition for above a week. On his recovery, however, he was induced, by considering how much security and serenity he had found in this humble retreat, to remain there till he could send me information of his safety, and also directions to join him by a circuitous route which he pointed out. That in consequence of this resolve he had employed as his messenger on the occasion an intelligent young man, son to the cottager beneath whose lowly roof he resided: and after an absence of ten days the young man returned with the answer from me, and assurances that he had delayed till he had seen me set off on my journey:—that Di Mirandini, relying on the pleasing expectation of soon beholding me, awaited my arrival at the cot, till at length the servant, who had attended me on the journey, and whom I had supposed to have perished when the accident in crossing the Secchia

had given me into the hands of Herman de Weilburgh, presented himself to my husband with a well-feigned account that myself and my female attendants had been unfortunately drowned:—that this artful tale, which was I imagine one of the machinations of the cruel Herman, who had most probably seduced and bribed my servant into this act of treachery, effectually imposed upon Mirandini, and drove him almost distracted:—that in the wild flights of his grief he wandered for several days, at intervals, through the caves beneath this cottage, or sat lamenting amid the rude wooded precipices that mark the northern entrance:—that at length the excess of his sorrow subsided into that state of despairing melancholy which impelled him to resign a world in which he conceived that he could no longer enjoy happiness or repose:—that this idea, so consonant to the state of his feelings, soon took full possession of his mind, and on the fourth day after having received the false intelligence of my death he set off with the young Orazio into Switzerland, carefully concealing, however, his intended route from his humble host and hostess at the cot, whose care and attention to himself and his young charge during their stay he so liberally rewarded, that they soon after removed to a farm several leagues distant from their former abode, and which they had purchased with the generous remuneration of my Mirandini.

"Angelo further informed me that the count, your father, my dear Cecilia, then proceeded to Zurich, where he reposed for a few days at the house of a gentleman with whom he had some years before formed a sincere friendship, during the visits of the latter to Venice, where he sometimes passed several months. To this friend he confided his wish of retiring from the world, and empowered him to transact the sale of some of his paternal estates in Tuscany. M. de Erville, so was this gentleman called, after attempting in vain to dissuade your sorrowing father from his intention of secluding himself, at length agreed to his wishes, and promised to negotiate the sale of his estates with as much dispatch and secrecy as the nature of the circumstance would permit; and to place the sum thus obtained in the bank of Zurich.

"Mirandini then proceeded with the young Orazio into the wildest recesses of the Alps, and soon fixed upon the remains of an ancient tower, situated in one of the rugged hollows of the Mount St. Gothard, for his future abode. Here, devoting himself to solitude and the care of the young Udina, he lived a life of cherished grief for the ruin of his friends, and the loss of his hapless wife, till about the expiration of two months, when accident introduced him to the knowledge of Angelo Guicciardini."

The signora here paused a moment. She perceived that the artless tears of Cecilia were fast falling at the recital of a parent's

sorrows; yet she feared to encrease the emotion of the lovely girl by particularly observing it, and therefore almost immediately resumed her narrative.

"When Angelo related to me the accident that led to his singular acquaintance with the count, your father, he spoke of himself with all the brevity of a generous spirit disdaining to record its own good actions; but I could fully comprehend that this extraordinary man had rendered my lamented Mirandini many services; and that, notwithstanding his daring and unlawful profession, he had possessed some share of the friendship of my husband. Chance it appeared had thrown Mirandini into the hands of a party of Angelo's men, who, according to the established rules of this banditti, brought him in perfect safety to their chief, who immediately released him, and ever afterwards while he lived testified for him a respect which ensured him the gratitude of the sad recluse."

Cecilia now ventured to interrupt her mother by enquiring what circumstance had led to the supposition of her father having been murdered by robbers near the mouth of the cavern.

"The incident which gave rise to that mistake is still involved in some mystery.

quitted the little cottage to proceed into Switzerland, the bodies of two murdered persons were discovered near the northern entrance of the cave, and one of these, al-

though nearly stripped, and very much disfigured, so greatly resembled my lord, that even the cottagers with whom he had resided did not long hesitate in pronouncing the body to be that of their late lodger, especially as the other body was instantly on beholding it identified as that of the servant whose fabricated intelligence of my death, had thrown him into such distress. A pocket-book, really belonging to your father, and with his name and title marked in the inside, was also found near the bodies; and as this article was likewise recognised by the cottagers, as having been several times seen by them in the hands of the stranger who had passed some time with them, no doubts were entertained on the subject; and the unknown traveller was buried as the Count di Mirandini, together with the treacherous servant, whose body being found in that place, naturally inspires one with the frightful suspicion that he had purposely attacked the stranger under the idea of his being your father, and had met the reward of his perfidy and villainy in the but too successful attempt to deprive the unknown of life."

The signora then related to her daughter the manner in which Orazio had been educated by the Count di Mirandini, some other particulars of the mode of life led by the youth and his generous friend in the wild seclusion of the Alps, with the circumstance of Velasques Maretti's confession, and the death of Mirandini: but

as this account, except in one circumstance, perfectly corresponded with that given by the Signora della Albina to Cecilia, at the desire of the Marchesa di Rovenza, in the Villa di Rovenza, it will be unnecessary to repeat it here. The circumstance alluded to, the Countess di Mirandini, as she will henceforth be called, proceeded to relate, after mingling her tears with those of her amiable child for the death of the Count di Mirandini.

"As my Cecilia is not then unacquainted with some parts of the relation I am giving, she has already heard that her father, a short time prior to his dissolution, wrote to the Count Ferbonino, discovering to that nobleman the situation of himself and Orazio, and imploring his protection for that amiable young man. The answer to this letter did not arrive till after the death of Mirandini, and of course fell into the hands of Angelo Guicciardini, in whom your father thought proper to place not only an extraordinary but an unlimited confidence in this affair.

"Singular as this may at present appear to you, my child, yet my lamented lord's friendship for this strange man will no longer seem so when you shall learn his real character. But to proceed.—It had been concerted between Mirandini and Angelo, that, in case the Count Ferbonino should send a favourable reply, Guicciardini himself should meet him at an appointed place, and personally ascertain the

sincerity of any good intentions he might profess towards Orazio. Had your father been able to have met the Count Ferbonino, Angelo would not have been employed on the occasion; but the hour of his death was rapidly approaching, and he feared not to confide the interests of Orazio to Angelo Guicciardini, who, the moment your father had expired, set off in disguise to Locarno, to which place the letter from the Count Ferbonino, according to the request of your father, was expected to be directed.

"Angelo found this much desired letter at the post-house on his arrival. On opening it, he found the contents exactly what he wished them to be. The count had written in all the enthusiasm of the warmest friendship, and had assented to every wish of your father respecting Orazio, and so well manifested the unfeigned interest he felt on the subject, that he promised to be at Locarno in less than three days after his letter, in order to meet there Angelo Guicciardini, whom Mirandini had represented to him as the friend and protector of Orazio.

To this meeting Angelo looked forward with considerable emotion. The Count Ferbonino expected to see in him the friend of Mirandini, the guardian of the young Udina; and yet it had been also revealed to the count, that the person he was to meet was in fact the robber Angelo Guicciardini. While Angelo reflected more

deeply on these latter circumstances, he became perplexed and uneasy at the facility with which the count had agreed to meet him, and although he had a high opinion of Ferbonino's generosity and honor, he yet almost suspected that that nobleman, considering him only as a robber, might think himself justified in betraying him into the hands of justice. This idea was not, however, so predominant in the mind of Guicciardini, as to induce him to think of avoiding the approaching interview with the count; but it determined him to use every prudent precaution that could save him from falling into any snare that might be laid to entrap him. With this design in view, he immediately began to consider where he could meet the count without endangering his own safety, and afer calling to recollection various places best adapted to the purposes of secrecy and security, he at length fixed on the cavern beneath our cottage as the one most likely to afford him the means of retreat, should retreat indeed become necessary in the interview. Ere he he came to a final resolution of meeting the count there, he resolved first to visit the cavern and explore its various intricacies and outlets. He had once found shelter there from inveterate pursuers, and had escaped them; but that was many years back, and even prior to the building of our cottage. It was necessary, therefore, personally to examine what alterations had taken place in that part of the

country since the period alluded to. Prompt in execution, as he was rapid in devising, Angelo had no sooner resolved on visiting the cavern than he quitted Locarno for that purpose, leaving behind him at the inn one of the most prudent and attached of his men to await the arrival of the Count Ferbonino, and with orders to bring him instant intelligence of the circumstance the moment he should behold the count, whose person he minutely described to him. Locarno, you know, is not many leagues from our cottage. It was evening, however, ere Angelo reached the caverns; but as he was provided with a torch and every requisite for the minute exploration of the place, he met with no impediment in the execution of his purpose. With unwearied scrutiny he traversed the spacious and intricate recesses of the cavern, till the faint vibrating echoes of these natural vaults replied to the midnight chiming of the priory bell.

"It was at this well-known signal that I was accustomed to leave my chamber, and to descend into the cavern to weep and pray beside the tomb erected to the memory of your father. Angelo, who happened at this very time to be in the exact part of the cavern where the tomb is raised, beheld me slowly advancing with such emotion as only his own language could give you any idea of. Hastily concealing his torch, he anxiously watched my approach to the tomb, which now, for the first time, he per-

ceived, and with a degree of curiosity and amazement, which rivetted him to the spot, he saw me prostrate myself on the steps which surrounded the cenotaph. He saw my tears—he heard my lamentations—heard me pronounce the name of my lost Mirandini; and to the shade, which fond imagination represented as the witness of my unceasing grief, vow that I had lived faithful to that beloved husband, whose death I still so bitterly deplored; and heard me call upon his sainted spirit to be the guardian angel of his child. The expressions which I then uttered, my Cecilia, were similar in their import to those which nightly I pronounced in the cherished sorrow of my soul; but upon this night, as if some singular presentiment gave animation to my feelings, in the unconsciousness that any human ear attended to my prayers and regrets, I poured forth every secret of my heart; and alluded to so many parts of my sad story, that Angelo soon fully comprehended who I really was, and the cruel treachery to which I had fallen a victim. In the first impulses of his surprise and agitation on discovering, in a midnight mourner, the long supposed deceased wife of Mirandini, he was often on the point of rushing forward from the place of his concealment to address me; to reveal to me the real destiny of my husband, and to claim my friendship for Orazio; but the consideration that the moment was unseasonable for such a discovery, and that he

might only alarm me, without being able to make me comprehend his motives so fully as he wished, deterred him, and he contented himself with guardedly following me as I returned up into the cottage, resolving at the same time, to make some enquiries respecting me in the neighbourhood as soon as the morning dawned.

"In following me he first discovered the communication between the cottage and the caverns; and this circumstance only confirmed him in his intention of seeing and conversing with me as speedily as he could.

"Leaving the cavern with the first glimmerings of the dawn, he strayed, as a traveller, to the little hamlet in the adjoining valley, and from the hut of a vine-dresser wrote me the letter, which he seemed so much surprised at my not having received prior to my seeing him in the garden. What passed in our interview in the garden I have already related to you, my child, it now remains to inform you that, in our second interview, after Angelo Guicciardini had concluded his explanatory relation, he requested me to receive Orazio into my cottage, till the Count Ferbonino should take him under his protection. At this request I involuntarily hesitated; for myself I would have run any hazard to have afforded the least security or ease to the son of Udina, but I trembled for thee, my Cecilia. The young Udina was described to me, by Angelo, as possessing every virtue,

combined with the most interesting manners and accomplishments, and adorned by every personal endowment of nature. I could not, therefore, without experiencing the utmost fear for your happiness, reflect, even for a moment, on the probable consequence of your being introduced to each other. My looks, my abstraction, explained to the scrutinizing attention of Angelo Guicciardini, all my doubts and apprehensions. Mingled grief and severity predominated in his glance, as, after a little pause, he said:—

"You do not assent to my request, Countess. You are apprehensive that Orazio and your Cecilia should imbibe for each other that pure and indelible sentiment which indissolubly unites the hearts of virtuous young people.

"Had the Count di Mirandini lived, he would not have dreaded to bestow the hand of his daughter on Orazio di Udina. How often while bewailing thy loss, has he shed tears of anguish that with you also perished the pledge of love, with which he hoped you would soon have presented him:—how often passed the sad hours in reflecting that hadst thou and thine unborn offspring been spared to him, that child might have proved a daughter, of whose love he could not have considered the noble-minded, although proscribed youth of his adoption, unworthy.'

"There was a sincerity so eloquent and open in the dark eyes of Angelo Guicciar-

dini, that while he spoke, conviction of the truth of his words was impressed on my heart, and the enthusiasm which the sweet idea inspired, that by granting his request to receive Orazio at the cottage, I should, in reality, be fulfilling the wish of my regretted lord, almost immediately determined me to declare that all my objections had vanished. Angelo received my assent in silent agitation, but his looks fully declared the satisfaction which my resolve had given him. When I enquired when I might expect the youth, he replied, in the course of a few days, and then added a request that I would again see him the following night, and entrust him with every particular of my history from the hour of my separation from my lord. To this request I also yielded an acquiescence; and Angelo then conducted me to the end of the stone steps leading up into the cottage, and once more reminding me of my promise to meet him the following night, bade me adieu."

CHAP. III.

"When I re-entered my rustic chamber, I perceived that the day-light was already visible, and my thoughts were so much engaged by the extraordinary interview in which I had passed the preceding hours, that I could not think of re-

tiring to repose, but sat meditating on the affecting communications made to me by Angelo Guicciardini, till your appearance to call me to breakfast obliged me to relinquish my reflections. Your own quick sensibility will enable you, my dear Cecilia, to comprehend, without my informing you, with what deep emotion I retraced every circumstance which had been related to me concerning your father. The truth of Angelo's narration became more apparent, the more it was considered; and while I wept in bitterness that destiny which had so singularly divided us, I yet gloried in the heroic friendship which had influenced your father to devote himself in his solitude to the orphan son of Udina, whom I now, with almost a mother's tender interest and anxiety, desired to see. But of the motives which had caused Mirandini to form so intimate a friendship with Angelo Guicciardini, I could entertain no just opinion, being still unacquainted with the private history and former rank of this uncommon character. The name of the robber Angelo Guicciardini had been familiar to me for some years back. I had heard of him from the first hour of our arrival at the cottage, and he had been described to me as a man singular in his general manners; a protector of the injured and innocent oppressed, and the most severe scourge of the guilty oppressor. Numberless examples of his generosity, humanity and bravery, were re-

lated to me, and contrasted with the instances of severe and dreadful vengeance which he was said to have inflicted on those whose cruelty, avarice, or mis-employed power had been the causes of affliction or ruin to the indigent and helpless. Nor did Angelo wait till chance threw such characters into his way.—Avowing himself the defender of the innocent and persecuted, he exercised a species of knight-errantry in vigilantly seeking out those, whom he was accustomed emphatically to denominate 'objects of mercy, and objects of vengeance,' and it was never known that he failed to procure for the wronged redress; and for the guilty punishment. In short, the name of Angelo Guicciardini is renowned for the exploits to which he has devoted himself, and the tale of wonder, or the simple ballad, alike record his marvellous feats, his acts of vengeful plunder, and his deeds of charity and mercy.

"That these accounts of this extraordinary bandit were indeed nearly allied to truth, I felt an instant conviction, on discovering him in the stranger whom I met in the cavern. In his whole appearance and language, I could easily perceive all the romantic sentiments, the daring courage, the innate love of justice and virtue, which such a character as his must possess, although acting upon the most erroneous principles; but when, to all these mental traits, I beheld united a figure

the most majestically commanding, a countenance on which every varying feeling of his animated and eccentric mind was impressively legible; a voice, whose soul-modulated tones possessed the faculty of communicating to those he conversed with the most thrilling comprehension of his own keen emotions, I no longer wondered at the notoriety and power which his great but mis-used talents had attained. As to the name and rank which Angelo Guicciardini may have formerly held in society, they are circumstances with which I am still unacquainted: it is sufficient for me to know that Mirandini thought him worthy his confidence, and therefore I denied him not mine, although I have never yet beheld him without shuddering at his situation."

Poor Cecilia now cast down her eyes, and the deepest glow of self-reprehension suffused her cheeks, as she remembered that, notwithstanding all that she had hitherto learnt of the services which Angelo Guicciardini had rendered to the Count di Mirandini, and Orazio di Udina, she had uever yet been able to consider that singular man with any other sentiments than those which were inspired by the terror and suspicion that his name, as a formidable bandit chief, was calculated to excite in a young and delicate mind. In what a different light was she now compelled to view Guicciardini! as one possessing virtues which could not be wholly

obscured even by his vices: the man who was honoured with the friendly confidence of both her parents; the guardian protector of her lover and herself; the avenger of the innocent, and the chastiser of the guilty! But this revolution of opinion did not induce her to interrupt the countess in a detail, every incident of which inspired her with new interest. This affectionate mother then, without betraying that she noticed the change of sentiment imprinted on the intelligent features of her lovely child, continued her narration.

"Eagerly anxious for the arrival of the appointed hour when I was again to meet Angelo Guicciardini, I thought the day more than usually long. It is true, in the approaching interview I was to reveal to this man all the past sorrows of my life, but I felt a considerable degree of satisfaction in the idea of explaining every thing to him, who had, for so long a period, witnessed the griefs of that beloved husband from whom I had been so cruelly estranged; from whom even my very existence had been concealed.

"At length midnight came, and I descended into the caverns. Angelo I found waiting by the tomb; a gleam of pleasure brightened his countenance at my approach, yet very few words were uttered by either 'till, at his almost instant request, I began a relation of those unhappy events which had occurred to me from the period when the count my husband left

Padua, to the hour of my meeting with Guicciardini.

"From the commencement to the close of my sad story, Angelo spoke not:—a sudden start, a sigh, a look of deep interest, were the only testimonies of the attention with which he listened to me, as with drooping head and folded arms, he leant on the cenotaph, and marked my every expression.

"When I had concluded speaking, he changed his position, and raising himself from the tomb, he said,

"Lady, your story is equally mysterious and distressing; but do not doubt that your enemies must eventually experience all the exposure and punishment they merit. The investigation of so intricate an affair, as the supposed union of yourself and the Count de Weilburgh, will, however, require both time and caution.'

"This was the only remark he uttered on my narrative, but the look that accompanied it was sufficiently intelligible to give me the assurance that all his power would be exerted on the occasion.

"After a moment's pause, he added, 'The necessity of my immediately proceeding to Sesto will excuse my entering into any detail of my plans for your welfare, lady. Three hours back I received a letter at Locarno from the Count Forbonino, who requests that the confidential guide he is to expect to conduct him to the retreat of his friend Mirandini may

meet him at Sesto, instead of Locarno, and where he will be in about a week.—This nobleman is worthy the confidence reposed in him. He accepts the charge of Orazio's future fortunes in the most noble manner, and I shall now hasten to bring the youth to the cottage.' He then requested me by no means to suffer Orazio to see the cross which he had presented to me on our first meeting in the garden. 'It was a token of friendship and remembrance given to me by the count when on his death-bed, in the presence of Orazio,' he continued, with a deep sigh, 'and I have urgent motives which induce me to conceal for a while from the youth who you really are, and the motives which have impelled me to seek for him your particular friendship. Orazio,' he added, while the deepest crimson flushed his cheek, 'has but latterly known me as the chief of banditti, and he now shrinks from my services: he will be less fastidious in accepting those of an unknown friend, who may be supposed to watch over his safety and welfare.' This was spoken in accents that betrayed both grief and pride; but quickly varying his tone, he once more mentioned the necessity of his immediate departure; earnestly cautioned me to be strictly reserved with the father Ascollini as to my knowledge of himself and of Orazio, and to be guarded on those subjects even with thee, my child; and then conducting me to the foot of the

stone steps, he again bade me adieu, and hastened through the caverns to pursue his road to the Alps.

"During three or four days, I expected with patience the arrival of Orazio, but when at length above a week passed on, and I neither beheld him, nor received the least intelligence respecting him, I became more surprised and distressed than I can describe. You will imagine then, that although I was rather unprepared for the singular manner in which he at last made his appearance, I was in no small degree rejoiced to see him enter into my cottage.

"The feint of pursuit after him made by Angelo Guicciardini, I easily conceived to be the result of some good design on his part, and was therefore not much astonished at his seemingly alarming intrusion; and in this idea I was confirmed by his address to the father Ascollini, to intimidate whom, I rightly conjectured to be the cause of Angelo's abrupt entrance His language and manner towards the prior, however, placed the character of the latter in a point of view equally new and painful to me. I had long known that Ascollini was avaricious and inquisitively curious, but the look and words of Angelo Guicciardini conveyed to me the idea that the father was dangerously designing, and, even at the moment, I rejoiced that I had never placed an implicit confidence in him.

"On the departure of Angelo, and when Orazio re-entered from the cavern, I experienced, however, a very violent shock on perceiving that he was wounded, and suffered the most acute anxiety and trouble on the occasion; 'till, on the day following, when I visited his apartment alone, I learnt from himself that by mere accident he had received the injury which had so much terrified us. This amiable young man, I discovered, in this interview, was really worthy the name of Udina, and that Angelo Guicciardini had not exaggerated in his account of him. But of the manners and accomplishments of Orazio di Udina, it is needless for me to speak to my dear Cecilia, who is so well acquainted with him. I shall therefore proceed without digression.

"I had scarcely descended from the chamber of Orazio, when a young peasant brought me a small billet, which he said a stranger had desired him to convey to me. It was written in the German language, and contained only one line:—— 'A friend implores the presence of the signora three nights hence at the tomb.' The initials of A. G. sufficiently explained to me that it was Angelo Guicciardini who made this request, and accordingly I descended into the caverns at the appointed time, and at the usual hour. Our interview was very short. To inform me that the Count Ferbonino had been made acquainted with my real name and story,

and would be at the cottage within a day or two, and to repeat his cautionary advice respecting the father Ascollini, was the principal cause of Angelo's visit to the tomb that night; but he departed not till in all the enthusiastic language in which he usually expresses himself, whenever deeply interested, he extolled thee, my child, as apparently possessing all the virtues and beauty of an angel. But this I should not repeat were I not well convinced that Cecilia is devoid of that vanity which sets too high an estimation on the voice of praise. In this interview I saw the character of Angelo in a new light. He was indeed still animated by the natural enthusiasm of his disposition, but it seemed the animation of paternal affection and exultation that sparkled in his large marking eyes when he spoke of thyself and Orazio; and while anticipating the eventual triumph of the latter over the enemies of his ruined father, and the probable union of the young Udina and my Cecilia, he seemed in imagination to surmount every fearful obstacle which could arise to impede the accomplishment of these his cherished hopes.

"Just as he was on the point of parting with me at the foot of the steps, I suddenly recollected to inform him that the prior Ascollini had earnestly entreated Orazio to accept the accommodations of the priory during his stay, and which the latter had thought proper to accept.—

Angelo reflected in silence on this proposal for a few minutes, and at length said, provided Orazio would be particularly cautious not to entrust the prior, or any of the community, with any particular relative to himself, no danger seemed likely to result from his acceptance of Father Ascollini's offer, and that on the whole, his being at the priory for a short time, would certainly appear less singular than his remaining entirely at the cottage. I then promised to use my influence with the young Udina to persuade him not to suffer himself to be betrayed into any imprudent confidence by the apparently candid manners of the prior. Angelo thanked me more by looks than words, and we parted."

CHAP. IV.

"Orazio received my warning advice respecting the Prior Ascollini with all that graceful, manly modesty, and those broken expressions of gratitude, which so peculiarly distinguish his manners and style of speaking, from those of young men educated in the world; there seemed, however, sufficient reserve in his disposition to guard him from imprudently betraying that which it was important he should conceal. His account of himself, even to me, was very limited, nor did he once mention the name of Angelo Guicci-

ardini.—Oh! how much did I suffer from the necessity of being equally reserved towards him on my part. He told me he had been educated in the utmost seclusion, and the manner in which he spoke of the protecting friend who had, with more than paternal care, watched over him from infancy, sufficiently proved the grateful veneration and affection that he cherished for Di Mirandini while he yet lived, and the keen sorrow which his loss occasioned him.

"At length the arrival of the Count Ferbonino, who, disguised as a pilgrim, visited our lowly cottage, to see Orazio, and to offer to me also his friendship and his services, formed another interesting event of this period. In his hopes of restoring the lustre of the name of Udina in the young Orazio, he was animated and sanguine; and, after having seen the youth, his lively anxiety on the occasion was increased beyond idea. Not less interested did this estimable nobleman feel on thy account, my Cecilia, and he had adopted the design of the union between yourself and Orazio with as much zeal and pleasure as I believe was ever experienced by Angelo Guicciardini, on the subject. You will recollect, he presented you with a casket of jewels, which, on beholding, I immediately recognised as exactly resembling some I had seen worn by the Countess Veronica di Udina, and which, I have since learnt, were given into his hands by Angelo Guicciardini for that purpose, and who

had received them from the count, your father, in whose possession those jewels accidentally were at the time of his being so suddenly obliged to fly, from the dread of being seized by order of the state inquisition of Venice."

The countess now paused, overcome by the remembrance of that afflicting period, till perceiving that her amiable daughter was even more deeply affected than herself she made a successful effort to regain an appearance of calmness, and anxious to withdraw the thoughts of Cecilia from so depressing a subject, she said—

"My Cecilia must remember that at the time of her opening the casket to examine the jewels contained in it, with what emotion she discovered the billet of Angelo Guicciardini, and I must now confess to her, that it was placed there by myself."

This singular explanation of a circumstance which had appeared so mysterious to Cecilia, excited her utmost surprise, and with breathless eagerness she entreated to be informed what motive had induced her mother to act thus.

"I concealed the billet in the casket at the express entreaty of Angelo himself," replied the countess. "He wished to impress upon your mind an indelible idea of his deep penetration, and to convince you that he secretly watched over your fate. Assured, that the timid delicacy of your nature would prevent your placing any confidence in a man of his dreadful

profession, and justly foreseeing that you might require his aid from future perils, he imagined that to make you believe that you could scarcely hope to conceal any thing from his knowledge, would be the best means of preventing your attempting to do so, should occasions occur in which it would be necessary you should unreservedly confide in him.

"And now, my Cecilia, I shall hasten to relate to you those circumstances which marked the hour of my being so cruelly separated from thee by the Count de Weilburgh. You will remember that on the day preceding that event, Orazio di Udina's disappearance from the priory subjected us to the endurance of all the angry conjectures of the father Ascollini respecting the nature of the youth's supposed intimacy with Angelo Guicciardini. It was this insulting and vexatious conduct on the father's part, that determined me immediately to entrust to your discretion the knowledge of the real rank and circumstances of Orazio, that you might not be induced by the prior's mistaken opinions to doubt the propriety and prudence of my admitting him to our home,—yes, it was to vindicate myself to thee, my child, that I commenced the narrative which the unexpected arrival of the Signor Malvezzi so alarmingly interrupted. You, doubtless, remember with what foreboding anxiety I went down to learn the occasion of his visit. Imagine my horror and despair, when, with looks of

the deepest concern, this good man presented me with a letter from the Marchesa di Rovenza, informing me that the detested Count Herman de Weilburgh had been some time in Venice, and had at length, by the most unaccountable means, discovered the secret of my retreat, and was at the time of her writing actually preparing to set off for the Milanese, in order to force me from my home. She then most earnestly assured me, that she had used all the dispatch in her power to warn me of the danger which threatened both myself and my daughter, who seemed to be peculiarly the object of the count's present pursuit. Regretting that the time would not permit her to consider whither she could advise us to fly to for safety from my persevering foe, she concluded with a fervent, heartfelt prayer that providence would once more enable me to escape the self-interested and malicious designs of the count.

" Thus I found myself entirely dependent upon my own resource for our future security, at the very moment when I was wholly destitute of every means of escape. But not for myself was I now distracted by my fears:—it was for you, my child, I trembled. As the legitimate heiress of those estates which Herman de Weilburgh had so unlawfully, and with so much cruel art, secured in his own possession, I feared that all his horrible schemes might now be chiefly aimed at your existence, and I instantly conceived the idea that were you but

secured from the power of this abominable man, I could brave his utmost malice.

"No longer young, and devoid of all personal attraction, I believed that the Count de Weilburgh would readily leave me to my solitude, when his hopes of securing you should be disappointed; and, under the influence of this supposition, I determined to conceal you for a short time in the caverns, justly imagining that, from the count's being unacquainted with the secret communication between the cottage and those dreary recesses, he would never form the idea of seeking you there. In the latter respect the event proved me right; but alas! I found I had totally deceived myself when I imagined that he would suffer me to escape him. No sooner did he and his myrmidons make their appearance, than I saw my error. Exultingly he seized me, and vehemently swearing, that he would never more suffer me to elude him as I had once already done, he exhausted every persuasion and threat to induce me to reveal to him where you were placed; but finding his efforts to compel me to the desired disclosure of your retreat fail, he vowed the most horrible revenge.

"My poor faithful Guispardo, fearless of the vengeance of this cruel man, ventured to interfere, when de Weilbugh, in loud and wrathful scorn, commanded some of his men to seize the good old man, and silence him; and then renewed his endea-

vours to make me say where you were concealed, till at length his rage at my silence became unbounded, and, with repeated threats, he ordered the men to bear me to the carriage ready in waiting, and directed that Guispardo should likewise be taken off; a measure to which he resorted in all probability lest this attached servant might cause him to be pursued. As the men bore me to the carriage I fainted. I will not repeat what were my sensations at the dreadful moment of returning recollection: my agonies on thy account were insupportable, till a faint hope darted a chearing momentary ray upon my mind, as the idea occurred that Angelo Guicciardini might possibly discover you in the caverns, and, when informed of the danger which threatened you, and of my having been so violently forced from my home, he would, in all probability, contrive the means of placing you in safety in some convent; and of rescuing me from the cruel Herman. Romantic as this hope would appear to those unacquainted with Angelo, it nevertheless afforded me so much consolation that I was enabled, by the support I received from my confidence in this singular man, to assume an air of coolness and fortitude which I could soon perceive gave Herman considerable perplexity and uneasiness, as he imputed it to my conviction that you were, indeed, secure from all his artful machinations and unlawful violence.

" For five days we travelled with the

utmost expedition, and were fast approaching the confines of the Trentino, on our way into Germany, when according to my intuitive expectations, I, with poor Guispardo, was indeed rescued from the Count de Weilburgh and his ruffians by a party of Angelo Guicciardini's men; among whom was a young man, whose height and figure bore no small resemblance to Orazio di Udina, but, as his face was masked and he spoke not, I had no opportunity of ascertaining the truth at that time. The superior number and power of Angelo's men soon enabled them to overcome those employed by the guilty and unfortunate Herman, who now met the fate which his crimes merited, and in the scuffle was so desperately wounded, that he has since died of those wounds. The horror and fear which the scene I was thus compelled to witness threw me into was so great, that I had scarcely power to keep my seat on the mule on which I was placed; and I had proceeded some distance with my new guards, ere I was able to enquire whither they were conveying me. At length, on my asking this question, the young man, whose appearance I had remarked as so much resembling Orazio's, and who now rode close by my side, presented me a letter, which on opening I found was addressed to me by Angelo Guicciardini. The contents were brief and consolatory; they were nearly as follow:

" Time and circumstances will not per-

mit me to explain at present to you, countess, by what means I have discovered the route by which your foe was conveying you away. You are now I trust once more freed from his power; but suffer me to entreat you to accept an asylum such as I can offer you, as particular reasons exist why you should not reveal yourself to the world at this period—your daughter is now safe beneath the protection of the Marchese di Rovenza, where, I believe, you had much better suffer her to remain 'till I can find a favourable opportunity of restoring her to your maternal arms. The death of de Weilburgh must secure you from the apprehensions of her falling into any danger by her residence in the Rovenza family. The confidence which you have already ventured to place in the robber Angelo, may possibly induce you to credit his sincerity and rely upon his word, when he assures you that he will unremittingly watch over the happiness of your Cecilia; but as this gentle, timid maid is enduring all the pangs which her grief for the incertitude of your fate inflicts upon her mind, you can, when you arrive at the place of your destination address to her a few lines, informing her that you are in safety:—yet let her not, for the present at least, suppose that you have received aid from me. Impute to Orazio your escape from de Weilburgh, and warn your daughter to be guarded in all she says respecting your present situation. Were she indeed to conceal her knowledge of

your safety, it might not be imprudent. My motives for this caution are important; this is not, however, the moment for explanation—Suffice it, although the generous and amiable Helena di Rovenza is worthy the most unreserved confidence, I am not equally certain that the marchese, her lord, may be so fully confided in:—a short time, however, will enable me to ascertain the truth or falsehood of my surmises on this point. As not the slightest injury can result to your Cecilia from her residence with the marchesa, you must endeavour to console yourself for a while with the assurance of her safety, nor need you fear mentioning to her Orazio as your deliverer from the Count de Weilburgh, as there is little probability of her seeing him for some time, he being at present on his way to join the regiment, in which he has been presented with a commission through the interest of his friend the Count F——.

"Angelo then concluded with repeated assurances that I should be constantly informed of your welfare.

"This letter equally surprised and agitated me. I did not doubt the truth of Angelo's assertion as to your being in the Rovenza family, but as I was unable to comprehend how you came there, I was both distressed and perplexed. I read the letter over several times, but still all was mystery to me, and at length I perceived I had no other alternative than to write to you in the manner Angelo had directed me

to do, and to wait as patiently as I could your explanatory reply. Every league we travelled now seemed an hundred, and I almost wearied the men by enquiries when our journey would end. On the second night, however, we arrived at a small cottage in a recluse situation in one of the most lonely hollows of the Alps that border the lake of Isio.

'This place, signora, will be your residence till you again hear from our chief,' said the young man, who unmasked as he assisted me to alight from my mule, and conducted me into the interior of the cottage, where a young man and woman, surrounded by several lovely children, stood up to receive me.

"I was so much surprised by the aspect of comfort and convenience which the inside of this little cot presented, and by the interesting appearance of its humble owners, that for a moment my thoughts were abstracted from my own afflictions, but the almost immediate recollection, of the letter I was to write claimed my whole attention, and, regardless of the entreaties of the young couple, who were respectfully imploring me to come near the blazing hearth and take such refreshments as the cottage then afforded, I anxiously asked for implements for writing, which were immediately procured, and I sat down to address thee, while my poor Guispardo, faint and wearied, availed himself of the hospitable invitation of our young host

and hostess. Before I had concluded my strange, and I fear, incoherent epistle, all of the men who had brought me to the cottage, except the young man whom I so particularly remarked, departed, and he waited to convey my letter to Angelo, to whom I also wrote a few lines imploring him to let me receive your answer as early as possible. The young man set off the moment my letter was ready; and for nearly twenty days I endured all the anxious misery which alternate hope, fear and suspense, could inflict.

"During this tedious interval I sometimes endeavoured to fly from my own thoughts by attending to the efforts made by my young hostess and her children to divert my grief. The tale of this young couple is affecting: they were both saved from oppression and ruin by Angelo, who placed them in their present little comfortable cottage, and gave them a few goats, with every other article pertaining to their station in life. Simple as were my accommodations, they were far superior to any that I could have expected to find in such a place; and after a few days' residence I could have been reconciled to pass the remainder of my life in so peaceful a seclusion, had I but been assured of thy happiness.

"But I will not fatigue and affect your spirits, my beloved child, by repeating what were my mental sufferings till the messenger returned with your ardently wish-

ed for letter. Oh, how fervently, and with what agitating emotions, did I press it to my heart and weep over its contents; and how providential did I believe the accidental arrival of the Marchese di Rovenza at our once happy cottage at such a moment, till I read farther.

"Your account of your reception and treatment in the Rovenza family would not only have gratified my heart by the assurance that you would be carefully protected, but also convinced me that you were, indeed, most eligibly situated, had not your account of the Marchese di Rovenza's extraordinary professions of being entirely unacquainted with the Count de Weilburgh, thrown me into the utmost astonishment and alarm; nor was I less amazed at your representation of the marchesa's conduct in affecting an entire ignorance of yourself and me. But, it is needless to disturb your mind by relating how various and contradictory were my surmises on these subjects: suffice, it to say that at length I felt inclined to put the most favourable construction on what had appeared to me so inexplicable, and I almost believed that the marchese concealed from your knowledge his intimacy with De Weilburgh, that you might not feel yourself alarmed and unhappy while under the protection of his family, and that the marchesa, finding that I had not confided to you my name and history, judged it prudent to be equally reserved on the sub-

ject, especially as she could thus avoid confessing to her lord our long and secret correspondence. It is certain, I was not without some suspicion that the marchese might have been acquainted with De Weilburgh's having carried me off, but as I knew that the latter had long since persuaded the former that I was his wife, I could attach no ill opinion to the marchese's being acquainted with his design; and from his kindness towards yourself, and the assurances which Angelo Guicciardini gave me of your safety, I rather augured good from the reserve observed towards you—a reserve which the more I reflected upon it, the more I considered it as originating in the benevolent consideration that it was needless to afflict you with distressing explanations of events which I had thought proper to conceal from you.

"From this period, till about a month previous to my being conducted to this cavern, I received only a few occasional lines from Angelo, informing me that you were well; but when these brief assurances ceased, I fell into a state of the utmost anxiety, grief and apprehension; and at length I would have set off for Venice had I possessed the means of undertaking the journey; but I was destitute of money for that purpose. The cottagers could afford me no assistance—my poor Guispardo was ill, and, in short, I was compelled to yield to the impracticability of leaving the cottage, enveloped as it was in wild and unfrequent-

ed mountains, the passes of which were few, and unknown even to the hunter and the goat-herd. My despair and impatience soon threw me into a voilent indisposition, from which I had scarcely recovered, when the usual messenger of Angelo Guicciardini presented himself, attended by another man, and announced that they had come to conduct me and my servant on a journey to a particular place, where their chief was impatiently expecting my arrival.

" A single line from Angelo, entreating me to be as speedy as possible in preparing for this journey, was the only assurance I received that his men now acted in conformity to his will. On my demanding whither I was to go, the young man informed me, that he was not at liberty to tell me. My astonishment was so much heightened by this strange procedure, that I believe I should have refused to accompany him, had not my apprehensions of being doomed to a renewed state of horrible suspense, determined me to undertake the journey without delay. For several days we travelled without stopping to take any further rest than what my weak state absolutely required, and at length I arrived here. Judge with what emotion I entered the outward cave, and beheld a small party of Angelo's men seated round a table, some half asleep, and others intent only on the flasks of wine which stood before them. In silence the young man conducted me through this group, who,

however, all rose and retired on my approach, and led me into this interior part of the cavern. In the wildest dismay I peremptorily insisted on receiving some explanation wherefore I was brought to such a place, when suddenly the distant sound of the bugle was heard.

"'It is Angelo himself!' exclaimed the young man, and darted into the outward part of the cavern. I mechanically followed his steps. All the men had now disappeared: they had flown to the entrance to receive their chief. I had not power to proceed further, but, resting on one of the benches that ran round the table, awaited the appearance of Angelo. After a few moment's silence the bugle was again heard—the sound was now much nearer. My heart palpitated with dread and expectation, as the echo of approaching footsteps vibrated along the rocky passage leading from the entrance: but how can I describe the trembling terror of my soul, as I beheld several of the banditti slowly emerge from the arch-way of the passage, bearing a female form on a litter. Impelled by the intuitive voice which whispered to my heart, I started forward to meet them, and, in the features of the fair, insensible young woman, instantly recognised thee, my child. My tortured feelings could not support this sight, and I fainted. On recovering, I found myself supported in a chair beside the bed in this part of the cavern, and the first object

which my eyes again encountered was my Cecilia, still inanimate and reclined on this bed. Guispardo, who had followed my steps, attempted to call my attention from thee, by presenting me a glass of cordial, which he was persuading me to swallow.—I put aside his hand, and my eyes again turned, in horror and anguish, towards thee.

"'You can be of no service to her, signora, till you have taken something to compose you,' repeated the good old man, and I instantly complied; alarmed by, and aware of the justice of his remark.

"In a few minutes I felt revived, and now, alive only to your terrific situation, I was attentive only to the means of awakening you from the deathlike inanimation in which you lay. Alas, my child, when I hoped that our efforts to restore you to some degree of sensibility were at length succeeding, your looks revived all the horror and despair that had seized my heart on your being brought into the cavern. Your eyes, indeed, unclosed, and your look was fixed on me;—but it was the look of vacancy, and I then perceived that your senses were disordered.—Spare me the agony of relating what I endured, while alternate fits of delirium and insanity enchained your faculties." The countess paused. She was overpowered by the emotions which the remembrance of those three days excited in her bosom. Cecilia threw herself at her feet, and bathed her hands

with tears of filial love and gratitude.—The affectionate mother bent over the lovely girl, and, while answering tears fell from her eyes, murmured a maternal benediction on her head. A few moments of affecting silence ensued ere she resumed her narrative.—" On the second night of your being thus restored to me, Angelo Guicciardini actually arrived. I heard the echo of his well-known voice pronounce our names, in tones which spoke all the eager inquietude of his mind. In a few minutes, he sent to desire to see me. All the wild anxiety that I felt to be informed why I saw you in such a state, could scarcely induce me to leave you for a moment. I was on the point of refusing to go to him, when he softly entered, and in low, but impressive accents, besought me to accompany him to a part of the subterranean where he might give me some requisite explanations, without running the hazard of alarming you, or of speaking in the presence of his men. His earnest assurance that Guispardo would carefully attend to you, and my wish to learn even what I trembled to hear, at length prevailed upon me to leave you to the care of Guispardo, and I followed Angelo into an obscure part of the cave, where only a single lamp, suspended from a rude projecting crag, threw a feeble ray around the dark space.

" Ere I had time to demand of Guicciardini what dreadful calamity had reduced you to the horrible state in which you had

been restored to me, he turned suddenly towards me, and in a voice of agitation and sorrow, said,

" Spare your reproaches—reproaches which certainly my want of discernment has, with apparent justice, subjected me to, but which I entreat you to forbear, when I solemnly swear to you that you have received your Cecilia as innocent and amiable as she was when you last beheld her. A gracious and overruling providence has preserved her,' he added with vehemence. ' The sword of omnipotent justice is suspended on the head of the accursed foe of Udina and Mirandini, and no longer shall the innate dissembling traitor, the arch hypocrite Rovenza, triumph in the spoil of the ruined innocents !'

" A fury, almost frantic, gave a dreadful animation to the features of Angelo as he pronounced these words. I started back in amazement. I had scarcely power to demand the meaning of his then inexplicable expressions.

" Then know,' he cried, ' that the detested Arnolpho di Aretino, that apparently stupid and imbecile object of the undone Costanza's unsuspecting friendship and compassion; that wretch, on whose gaunt, abhorrent form and features, the hand of nature has truly stamped the index of a monstrous and accursed soul; that crawling abject worm, whom mistaken pity could alone behold with endurance, was the subtile gliding serpent that, en-

twining round the heart of open generosity, fixed deep the poisonous sting of treachery in the bosom that supported him, and doomed to death and infamy the protecting relatives that snatched him from obscurity and penury.'

"Rovenza!' I exclaimed, while reason had almost failed me, as in breathless horror I had listened to the dreadful assertion.

"Yes, Rovenza!—the dark, detestable Rovenza!' returned the robber, in tones indicative of the heart's deepest rage, 'that unparalleled deceiver, whose apathetic indolence and immovable ignorance, formed but the impenetrable veil of a heart, over whose secret impulses malice, avarice, and ambition presided with undisputed empire. But the All-seeing eye which never slumbers, and the ear that hears alike distinctly the sighs of suffering virtue, and the soul-whispered exultation of triumphant guilt, the hand that guides the motion of the universe; that power whose boundless attributes human reason never yet could fully comprehend; whose long forbearance to punish the crime-stained wretch, black with deceit and murder, is oft so inscrutable to misjudging mortals, at length extends the arm of vengeance, and in throwing back the artful veil of virtue from the face of vice, proclaims aloud the justice of offended heaven.'

"The enthusiastic wildness of Angelo's looks and gestures evinced the unfeigned interest with which the wrongs of Udina,

and the crimes of Rovenza, had inspired him. For an instant he communicated to my heart all the ardour of his own feelings, and I demanded in the most eager manner, an explanation of his mysterious expressions; but in the next moment, remembering that this explanation might possibly detain me too long from you, my child, I recalled my words, and pointed out the necessity of immediately resuming my watchful care.

"Angelo, then more calm, immediately acknowledged that to enter into a long detail of circumstances would, indeed, be imprudent at such a moment; and with a tenderness of manner which formed the most striking contrast with his recent energy, said—

"Return, amiable mother, to the couch of your angelic child, whose innocence and virtues render hers worthy of every care which maternal affection can suggest. When your Cecilia shall be so far recovered as to be able to relate to you the events which occurred to her during your separation, I will then explain all the mystery of this iniquitous affair. At present my so doing would be useless, as, without first hearing her narrative of the occurrences in which she has lately been engaged, you could not fully comprehend me. Suffice it to you now to know that the real foe both of Udina and Mirandini is discovered, and that the honour of those illustrious houses will again shine forth

with renewed splendour from the night of disgrace which has so long obscured their lustre.'

"Angelo then, with all the hesitation of mingled apprehension and concern, made some enquiries respecting your health, assuring me that I should be accommodated with every thing that could contribute to your recovery.

"We then separated, and I returned to take my place beside your bed. With what an emotion of hope and joy did I find that you were fallen into a calm slumber which lasted some time.

"When I had once more resumed my anxious watch, Guispardo went to inform Angelo of the change that had taken place, and on the following morning I had another interview with him. After expressing much gennine satisfaction at the prospect of your recovery, he told me that if I wished to have the female attendant with me, who had been so faithfully attached to my daughter, and had been with you during your residence in the Rovenza family, he would immediately send for her. I now felt shocked that I had so long omitted to enquire for our poor Lodelli, and eagerly demanded where she was? Angelo replied:—

"She is at present in a convent, whither I wish you to remove as soon as Cecilia is able to travel. Some circumstances that I cannot now detain you to relate, prevented my having her brought hither with your

daughter; and even now if you can dispense with her attendance, I think it would be best, as some danger may attend her journey to this place.'

"I immediately declined his sending for Lodelli, and asked where the convent was situated in which she was placed. Angelo replied:—

"Not many leagues distant.'

"He then, with some precaution, informed me that you had lately been confined in the Castle di Torcello, whither you had been secretly conveyed by Leonardo di Rovenza, and gave, as his reason for not wishing to send for Lodelli, unless I particularly required him to do so, his fear that some people employed by the marchese to revenge the attack he had made on the castle in order to effect your liberation and punish its owner, might meet the party who should be sent to conduct Lodelli to the cavern.

"These few particulars filled my mind with increased anxiety to learn all that you had suffered during our separation; and to receive the promised explanation of Angelo. But you perceive, my dear Cecilia, that events have still combined to keep us in painful incertitude. The sudden and unexpected departure of Angelo Guicciardini, has prevented all elucidation of those mysterious occurrences that have so much harrassed and perplexed us all, and compels us to remain still involved in all the torments of suspense and anxiety; and

although I feel so earnestly desirous of hearing your detail, even the minutest circumstances in which you were engaged, while under the protection of the Rovenza family, I yet dread lest your relation should only give me new causes for grief and perplexity."

The countess now ceased to speak. Cecilia scarcely knew in what manner to reply. Her imagination was bewildered with the inexplicable circumstances which she should have to relate, together with those apparent in the narrative of her mother. In short, all was still so enveloped in mystery, that she felt almost reluctant to enter on a detail, so many points of which she could not explain; but above all, her heart was secretly tortured by a thousand fears for the life of Orazio. She had suppressed as much as possible all appearance of the deep inquietude which she suffered, while her mother was recounting the events of her life; but she could now no longer conceal the anguish of her soul, and instead of replying to the wishes of the countess, she falteringly asked whether Angelo was gone in search of Orazio di Udina.

The amiable countess, who had dreaded what effect intense anxiety on this interesting subject might produce on the slowly returning health of her daughter, had commenced her own narrative so immediately after the departure of Angelo, in order to abstract the thoughts of Cecilia, in some degree, from dwelling on the danger to

which the young Udina was but too probably exposed; and this judicious and affectionate procedure had in some measure succeeded, as the singularity of the circumstances she detailed — circumstances in which Cecilia herself was so deeply interested, had not failed to secure her earnest attention; but still her grief and fears for her lover—a lover to whom she had now discovered she ought to be united, had constantly recurred, and she could at length no longer forbear yielding to the heart-rending emotions which her unhappiness on his account caused her to experience.

The countess, who was nearly as much afflicted as herself, offered every soothing consolation which could be impressed on her mind, by inspiring her with hope; and the poor Cecilia, in gratitude to this tender parent, essayed to lull the tumults of her heart; and to calm the maternal anxiety of the countess, even proposed to begin her own relation; but, as her whole appearance indicated that her spirits were already too much exhausted for undertaking such a task, her mother would not permit her to make so great an exertion until she had taken some repose; and, in compliance with her beloved parent's wishes, the lovely girl swallowed an opiate which soon procured her that rest so essential to the renovation of her harassed spirits; nor was she permitted, till the following day, to

recount to her mother the events which had occurred to herself during their long separation.

CHAP. V.

It is now necessary to enter on some details relative to the real character of the Marchese di Rovenza, and explain how far he was deserving of the horrible imputation of having been the destroyer of the Udina family. That there are human beings possessing dispositions truly capable of the most diabolic hypocrisy and cruelty, beings who will not hesitate at the commission of the most atrocious crimes, when influenced by malevolent and selfish motives, daily observation may convince any one who will take the trouble to investigate the base and interested views by which mankind in general are so much governed, or that even the mere temporary gratification of evil impulses will lead to acts the most abhorrent. A virtuous and enlightened mind, a mind which can conceive and feel all the beauty and value of religious philanthropy—a mind governed by the impulses of that divine charity which "hopeth all things," cannot easily be led to believe the existence of that depravity of heart which selfishness invariably pro-

duces, and therefore too frequently becomes the dupe of all who wear an amiable exterior—the prey of the designing, and the ridicule of those who know the world, until conviction and suffering end the illusions of what is called romantic credulity, and leave the heart pierced and lacerated by the empoisoned arrows of disappointed hope.

Arnolfo di Aretino was born with no worse propensities than those which were the result of natural defect. He was indolent as a child, because the uncouth awkwardness of his form rendered him incapable of feats of activity; dull and silent, from being a stranger to that exertion which gives health to the body, and animation to the mind and spirits; and, destitute of sensibility and education, because the voices of affection or instruction were never heard by him. Alas, it was to his mother he owed almost all the evil dispositions of his soul. Proud, and unamiable in her temper, and ever regretting her imprudent union with Di Aretino, as the cause of her alienation from the notice of her illustrious relatives, the hatred she bore her husband was extended to her child, whose personal deformities, instead of compassionating, she turned from with abhorrence and disgust, and the unfortunate child was alternately the object of reviling or neglect. "Had it not been for my marriage with thy father, I should not have been rejected by the house of Udina,

thou monstrous image of ugliness!" was repeated almost daily from the lips of his mother. "The Signora Padrona is so afflicted with the unkindness of the Count di Udina, her brother, that she loves not you as she otherwise would do," was almost the only consolation Arnolfo received from an old servant, to whom he usually went crying from the presence of his mother, who also frequently inflicted upon him no very gentle corporeal marks of her dislike.

Thus inured, from his first moments of perception, to neglect and cruelty, and taught to attribute his misfortunes to the unforgiving and irascible disposition imputed to the Count di Udina, Arnolfo gradually imbibed sentiments of deep and rooted hatred for the Count; an aversion which strengthened daily, as he daily became more sensible of his own wretched state; and as all his feelings were concentred in himself, as he had no parent, no friend, to check the course of this dangerous spirit of enmity, he cherished it the more carefully, and even his infant wish was, "Oh! that I was a man, that I might kill that wicked Udina, who made my mother hate me!"

It may naturally be imagined that the mind of Arnolfo had undergone no change when he was received into the family of Udina; and the reception which he met with from the Count di Udina, who, it may be remembered, was inexpressibly dis-

gusted by his appearance and ignorance, served to confirm this habitual hatred into the most deadly malice. For one moment, however, Arnolfo was really affected by the genuine kindness of the generous Costanza; but unluckily he recollected at the same moment that one of his mother's domestics used to coax him at times, in order to throw him into greater ridicule when she sported at his personal defects; and the idea that Costanza was probably influenced by the same motive, chilled the transient glow of gratitude, and gave him that sickly sensation of incredulity and fear, which seldom fails to terminate in doubt and dislike towards the object who has excited it. His taciturnity of temper, and the habitual dissimulation which he had acquired from the necessity of concealing his feelings, lest a display of them should subject him to the rage of his mother, and the laughter of her few domestics, gave him, however, sufficient power not to suffer his real character to appear, and while he inwardly exulted in the hope of future revenge, he resolved to avail himself of every advantage which should be offered him of instruction, and to bear whatever slights he should receive, as he had borne them at home—that is, with apparent apathy. To personal exercise, he thought it useless to pay any attention, but to every mental information, he gave the deepest reflection, and while the ingenuous, unsuspecting Costanza believed his folly and want of

comprehension irremediable, Arnolfo was secretly imbibing knowledge with all the clearness and avidity of superior intellect. It was now, indeed, that Aretino exulted. His secret acquirements were sources from which he derived his most dangerous and formidable powers; his nights were devoted to the most ardently intense study; his days to a display of the stupid listlessness which he affected; and while he was universally considered as the greatest dunce and ideot in Venice, he was secretly one of the most artful and consummate of hypocrites. Every work which treated of the human heart, every species of worldly knowledge, was treasured by him with a miser's care; and with the most watchful anxiety and cunning caution he looked forward for a favourable hour to put his talents into practice.

At length his wishes were most fatally gratified by a circumstance which soon roused him into action. With all his personal defects, Arnolfo secretly entertained a most decided propensity to female society, and no sooner had he beheld Veronica Loredana, than she inspired him with a passion as indelible as it was violent.— To any other man than Arnolfo di Aretino the hope of obtaining so lovely a young woman, and one on the point of being united to a senator of Venice, would never have presented itself; but when he discovered that Costanza had also felt the influence of her charms, he began to en-

courage a hope that by some lucky plan she might yet become his own. His rage at perceiving that she returned the affection of Costanza was extreme, but it furnished him with the means of gratifying his love, and his secret hatred at the same time; he therefore offered himself as the confidential friend of the lovers, and thus making himself master of all their intentions, believed himself in possession of the power of frustrating them. His first design was to give the Signor Ollivetto an anonymous information of the correspondence of his cousin and Veronica, and to have traduced her character in such a manner, as to make him decline any union with her; a disgrace, which, he thought, would adhere so indelibly to her name, that the Count di Udina would never permit his son to wed her, and thence a prospect of ensuring her to himself would soon be opened. This project was, however, difficult to be executed, and a better opportunity of putting his cruel designs into practice at length offered.

One of the servants of the Signor Geronimo Ollivetto, Biondello, was suddenly discharged from his master's service for ill conduct, and came and offered himself at the Udina palace, where he was soon rejected. As he retired, he was met by Arnolfo, who hearing him mutter a threat of revenge against the Count di Udina, carefully observed him, and contrived to see him in private a few days afterwards,

when, with his usual art and caution, he discovered that Biondello was a confirmed desperado, fit to be entrusted with any scheme of villainy, provided he was well paid for his services. To liberally reward the instrument of his malicious designs was amply in the power of Arnolfo, the lavish generosity of Costanza having profusely furnished him with abundant means, exclusive of the liberal income he annually received from the Count di Udina. A large sum was the prelude to the future remuneration of Biondello, who, as he held out his hand to receive the purse of sequins, vehemently swore to execute whatever task should be enjoined him by so noble and spirited a cavalier. The placing forged political papers in the private cabinet of Costanza, and the murder of Geronimo Oltivetto, on the very eve of his intended nuptials, was the scheme now preferred by Aretino to his original plan of blackening the chaste fame of the innocent Veronica; and the malevolent Biondello could not have been employed in any plot so well calculated to gratify his own revenge on his former master and the Udina family. This dreadful scheme promised to Aretino a far more perfect completion of his wishes than his first design could have done. A thousand accidents might have cleared the innocence of Veronica, but now that her betrothed husband should be imagined to have been murdered by the hand of the lover she favoured; and now, that that

lover would undoubtedly suffer death as an enemy to the state, and his unfortunate parents become involved in his ruin and disgrace, Arnolfo could hardly suppose that she could escape him.

It was probably the ease and facility with which his designs could be carried into effect, that rendered Aretino at this time so inattentive to the actions of the lovers; and while he was engaged in forging the documents intended for the destruction of the Udina family, Costanza and Veronica arranged the means of their projected flight from Venice, without entrusting either Helena or Arnolfo with their intentions; not that they doubted their affection and friendship; but, although they were so much blinded by love, they could not be wholly insensible to the error of their design, and therefore feared to encounter those persuasions and entreaties, which might induce them to resign every hope of mutual happiness.

How well the dreadful plans of Aretino succeeded, events have already declared. The plot was easy in its accomplishment; the hurry of the preparations for the nuptials of Geronimo Ollivetto and Veronica, rendering the domestics of the pallazo Di Rovenza inattentive in the observation of any stranger, as the palace was filled with artists, musicians, and workmen, engaged on the occasion. Biondello, therefore, and the accomplice whom he had hired to take the active part in this horrid business,

readily contrived to place the papers in the cabinet of Costanza; and the murder of Ollivetto was managed with as little difficulty, while Arnolfo himself put a secret denunciation against his cousin in one of the lion's mouth of the doge's palace. Full of the anticipation of the wide spreading destruction which would be the result of his art, he arose with the first dawn of light; but he dared not quit his chamber. A sensation of remorse, and the fear of being suspected, made him resolve not to appear till the discovery of Ollivetto's murder should have taken place. What were his emotions when, on rushing forth at the sounds of those dreadful screams which echoed along the vaulted domes of the palace, he found that the principal objects of his designs had fled—fled in the very moment of his fancied triumph! It was now no longer remorse for the death of Ollivetto: it was not compunction at witnessing the good Di Udina expire in horror: neither was it the distraction of the countess that caused him to tremble; but it was the flight of the lovers that covered him with confusion and dread, while all the rage of jealousy and disappointed passion combined to add the most acute agony to his feelings.

It was not, however, for such a mind as Arnolfo's to be unguarded in the moment of danger; and, affecting to be overpowered by the horrible scene he beheld, he retired to meditate in what manner he should avert the consequences which, in

the present state of the affair, might fall upon himself. While he was thus deliberating, the officers of the state inquisition made their visit to the palace in search of Costanza. After their taking notes of the dreadful events that had marked the night, Aretino and several of the visitors and domestics were arrested and carried to the prison of St. Mark. Private and separate examinations now took place: the testimony of all but that of Aretino agreed with each other. His was an examination of the most serious nature, for he confessed himself to be the denouncer of Costanza; and, in proof of his assertion, produced half of thep aper on which the charge had been written. Secure of the most impenetrable secrecy from the state inquisitors, whose rules will not permit them to reveal the accuser, he added falsehood to falsehood, and so effectually succeeded in apparently evincing the criminality of his cousin, and his own innocence, that he was soon set at liberty, and loaded with the thanks and favours of the state. It was in the execution of this diabolical act that Aretino fully manifested the excess of art he had secretly acquired. Still preserving the semblance of the stupidity by which he was distinguished, he made his accusation appear as the effect of fear for himself, and apathetic insensibility to the kindness of his relatives, yet still at the same time dwelling upon the gratitude he owed them, but in such a manner as to display that that gra-

titude was not sufficiently powerful to induce him to hazard his own life by concealing the knowledge he had obtained of Costanza's intentions. Thus far successful, he had now only to guard against detection, and to make every possible effort to discover whither the fugitive lovers had flown to, and to devise some method of betraying Costanza into the hands of the Venetian inquisition. He had already had the precaution to send Biondello and his accomplices out of the way, immediately after the commission of the murder; and as he felt convinced that their regard for their own personal safety would render them careful to avoid discovery, he did not scruple to attach suspicion to Biondello, and thus crushed in the eye of the world all probable conjecture that might glance upon himself as the author of the ruin which had overwhelmed the House of Udina. His unceasing and secret endeavours to discover the retreat of the lovers were soon in part successful, as he at length learnt that they had gone into Tuscany, and had been for a short time the visitors of the Count di Mirandini, from whence they had suddenly disappeared. No farther trace of them could be discovered, for not even his artful letter to the Count di Mirandini, nor his liberal enclosures for the use of his injured cousin, could induce the former to yield up the secret. Thus disappointed, he was inclined to reveal to the members of the state inquisition the discovery he had

made of Costanza's being received and concealed by Mirandini; but fearing that should he act prematurely, some chance might betray the means he had already taken to ruin his cousin, he resolved to continue his own private efforts to discover the retreat of the unfortunate pair, and then, in case of success, devise some means of throwing Costanza into the hands of the inquisition, without his having any further personal interference in the affair. Whilst his agents were thus employed, Rovenza conceived the design of addressing the lovely Helena Loredana, who was at this period in a convent, mourning the destruction of her beloved sister and the House of Udina; and she consented to become his wife on the condition of being at liberty to retain half her fortune for the use of that dear sister, and of offering her an asylum, should the threatening fate of her lord reduce her to the necessity of accepting this generous provision. No proposition could have been more congenial to Rovenza's wishes than this was. Still passionately distracted to obtain possession of the beautiful Veronica, this unprincipled and libertine monster considered his marriage with her sister not as an obstacle, but as the most certain step to the attainment of his views. Veronica once a widow, her husband ignominiously doomed to suffer the disgraceful death of a traitor, where could she seek for consolation but from a sister so tenderly attached to her; and

what other opportunity so favourable for him to ingratiate himself into her esteem, as the kindnesses he could shew her at such a time afforded? Not that he dared to entertain the most remote idea that she would ever assent to his wishes; nor did he intend to let her perceive his real designs till after she had recovered in some degree the shock she must suffer from the death of her husband, and then he meant to privately remove her from the protection of her sister, to where she could have no means of evading his power. The discovery of the retreat of the hapless Costanza and Veronica was not made, however, till some time after the arrival of the Count and Countess di Mirandini at Venice, where one of Rovenza's agents contrived to seduce Ursulina, then the principal attendant of the Countess di Mirandini, into betraying the secret of their residence in the fortress of Zamona. It was then that Rovenza felt himself certain of the full accomplishment of all his detestable designs. He knew that the Di Mirandinis did not suspect his treachery, and consequently he believed that Costanza di Udina was equally unacquainted with his villainy. As soon, therefore, as the Count and Countess di Mirandini removed into the Paduano, he sent off a trusty messenger to the fortress of Zamona, with an artful letter to Costanza. In this epistle the designing Arnolfo took admirable care to preserve the same style of language in which he had ever been accus-

tomed to converse with his cousin. The same apparent want of intellectual talent was still visible, and he expressed some of the most amiable sentiments of the heart in terms equally languid and uncouth. His seemingly undesigning and simple representations and persuasions, however, fully answered his hopes, and the hapless Costanza fell into the snare, resolving rather to brave every danger which could attend his return to Venice, than longer endure that life of ignoble seclusion so painful to his soul, and which he never could have supported even for a day, had not his ardent affection for his lovely Veronica made him tremble at the idea that should he expose his life to hazard, she could not survive the event of his death. Yet now that there appeared to be a prospect of vindicating his innocence, of restoring his family to the world, he could no more resist the powerful impulse which he felt to come forward in his own defence; and, in all the blind enthusiasm of ill-founded hope, he undertook his disastrous journey to Padua and Venice. After leaving his lovely wife, their son, and attendants, at the villa of the Count di Mirandini, and scarcely permitting himself time to reveal to the latter the motives for his imprudent journey, Costanza proceeded in disguise to Venice, where, after remaining some time ere he could obtain a private interview with the treacherous Rovenza, he was arrested on his return to Padua, and immediately hurried away to the prison of

St. Mark. Here he suffered all the horrors of the most rigorous confinement for several weeks before he underwent an examination; and when at length he was brought before the council of the inquisition, he found that the belief of his guilt was so firmly fixed in the minds of his judges, and their confidence in the testimonies which they professed to be in possession of, so unlimited, that every effort to remove them proved unavailing, and merely served to irritate them more violently against him.

While the unfortunate Costanza was thus exposed to the endurance of every species of suffering that could be inflicted, in order to compel him to a confession of crimes which he had never committed, the diabolic Rovenza was secretly exulting in the certainty of his destruction, and planning new schemes to obtain possession of the beauteous wife of his cousin, and to save himself from the consequences which an intuitive dread of future retribution whispered to his guilty mind.

Although the detested Rovenza was but too well assured that he should have nothing more to apprehend from the miserable Costanza, and though he imagined that the Count di Mirandini had not the least idea of his consummate vileness, still he could not conquer the irresistible dread which he felt that the latter would, at some period or other, prove the discoverer and avenger of the horrible arts by which his

friend's utter ruin had been effected. Impressed with such a fear, it is not strange that Rovenza should soon resolve to add another victim to his malignant designs, and to silence for ever his apprehensions of Di Mirandini, by involving him in the fate of Udina. This was not difficult to do. He could produce sufficient testimony that the Count di Mirandini had secretly harboured Costanza and Veronica, and screened them for above three years from all the minute scrutiny which the secret agents of the state inquisition of Venice had exerted to discover their retreat; and as Di Mirandini was of too ingenuous and noble a disposition to make any very plausible defence of his conduct in this respect, Rovenza could not doubt but that he would eventually fall a sacrifice to the jealous precautions of the state. The greatest hypocrites and deceivers, however, not unfrequently defeat their own plans, by the very means which they adopt to render them more certain, and remove all suspicions from themselves. Thus it now happened with the artful Rovenza, who mentioned to his lady the probable apprehension of the Count di Mirandini, and deeply regretted this dreaded circumstance, while at the same time he expressed the utmost concern at not being able to warn the count of his danger, lest his so doing should only plunge himself into a similar misfortune, without proving of the least benefit to the count.

The compassionate and amiable Helena heard this intimation with silent horror and concern; and the moment her lord withdrew, she wrote to the Count di Mirandini that anonymous letter which occasioned his abrupt departure from the villa—that sad separation which involved both himself and his lady in so many heavy afflictions, but which, however, certainly preserved the count from being a fellow-sufferer with the undone Costanza di Udina. The flight of Di Mirandini, and his taking with him the young son of Udina, was a severe shock to the Marchese di Rovenza, who in vain resolved to make every possible attempt to discover the route he had taken, and who now lost no time in removing Veronica to the Villa di Rovenza. Obdurate as was the heart of Rovenza, he could not behold the melancholy situation to which the lovely object of his criminal passion was reduced by the knowledge of her husband's dreadful destiny, without experiencing some of the bitterest and keenest sensations of remorse.

These salutary moments of compunction were, however, too transient to leave any impression on his callous soul; and instead of yielding to the voices of conscience and humanity, he closed his ears to their appeal, and, seeking to drown these newly-awakened feelings in the anticipation of the future raptures he should enjoy with the beautiful Veronica, he soon eradicated from his mind every thought inimical to the

execution of his present execrable plans. Believing, in general with all men of selfish and abandoned principles, that the idea of female constancy and affection was merely visionary, and that no woman could long withstand the persevering persuasion of a lover, who had art and address enough to induce her to believe that her smiles would render him for ever devoted to her alone, Rovenza doubted not that when Veronica should be recovered from what he imagined to be a mere transient delirium of mind, he should eventually succeed to his wishes; and leaving her to the care of his lady, the Signora della Albina, and the physician, he gave his attention to a circumstance which at the moment particularly occupied him.

On the day after the Count di Mirandini's flight with the young Udina, and Veronica's removal to the Villa di Rovenza, he accidentally discovered, by means of one of his secret spies, the plans of Count Herman de Weilburgh, who had for some time been resident in Venice, and who was known to him as a constant frequenter of all the gaming-houses there. To aid the cruel designs of this depraved being, and to throw the amiable Countess di Mirandini into his power, instantly struck Rovenza as the most favourable means of effecting the destruction of those generous friends of Udina, or at least of destroying their peace and felicity; and he directly hinted to his agent to afford the Count de

Weilburgh every possible assistance for that purpose. The man to whom he gave this commission most readily accepted it. He had already been highly bribed by Herman to reveal to him whatever discovery he could make relative to the Count di Mirandini's retreat, and the intentions of the countess; and the directions of Rovenza for him to favour the Count de Weilburgh's designs added double interest and alacrity to his proceedings. By this means Rovenza became as well informed of every thing relative to the Mirandinis as was the Count Herman himself, who, however, was at this time entirely ignorant of the real character of the marchese, or that he was secretly facilitating his designs upon the Count di Mirandini. The agent, who was thus doubly employed, was too adroit in his trade to suffer the least incident, by a keen observation of which he could hope to serve his employers, to escape him; and therefore, as he was ever on the watch, he encountered the rustic messenger whom the Count di Mirandini had sent from the cottage where he had at first taken refuge, with the letter appointing his lady to meet him in the Milanese.

By the trick of affecting to be a fellow-countryman of the young peasant's, he easily persuaded the latter to entrust him with the letter which he had to deliver to the countess, solemnly promising to have it much earlier presented to her than a stranger could; and thus imposing upon

the simple young man, who, however, was not destitute of a tolerable share of natural good sense, although so ignorant of the arts of habitual designers, he obtained possession of the letter. Under pretence of immediately conveying it to the countess, he left the peasant at the little inn where they had been regaling themselves, and hastened to another, where he opened the letter, copied the contents verbatim, and, artfully reclosing it, speedily delivered it at the villa. In a short time he was ordered into the presence of the countess, who, mistaking him for the messenger really employed by the count her husband, asked him several questions relative to her lord, which the man, from the knowledge he had gleaned of the count's situation from the peasant, was enabled to answer in rather a satisfactory manner; after which that amiable woman confided to his care her answer, and rewarded him for the intelligence he had brought in the most munificent manner. This cunning agent of Rovenza then departed, with all the internal satisfaction which his success excited in his mind, and instantly set about taking an exact copy of the countess's letter, which, with his usual dexterity, he soon sealed again, and flew to deliver to the peasant, taking care, however, to give the young man half the contents of the purse presented to him by the lady, but which he certainly would not have done, had he not apprehended that, should the peasant return without receiving

any remuneration for the trouble of his journey, the count might be led to suspect that some imposition had been practised, and by his consequent enquiries learn sufficient to discover the truth. In order also to prevent this result from occurring, he cautioned the peasant not to inform the count that he had not personally delivered the letter; and after twice repeating to him the conversation which had taken place between the countess and himself, and minutely describing her person to him, he saw the credulous rustic set out upon his return to the Milanese. He then proceeded to give the Marchese di Rovenza an account of the success of this well-managed trick, and deliver to him the copies of the letters. The discovery of Mirandini's retreat, and the intention of the countess to join him as soon as possible, was more highly gratifying to him than he chose to acknowledge at the moment. He, however, most liberally rewarded his cunning agent, and promised to take him into his service at no distant period, and then instructed him to wait on the Count de Weilburgh, and to give him the copies of the letters, after explaining to him the successful manœuvre by which he had possessed himself of them; strictly cautioning him, however, to still conceal from the count the active interest which he himself took in the affair.

The obsequious agent, who was no other than Fabricio, rigidly adhered to these

instructions, and had little difficulty in persuading the Count de Weilburgh that he had acted in this manner merely to serve him.

Herman de Weilburgh lost not a moment ere he resolved to make the meditated journey of the countess the means of getting her into his power, and which design, by a strange coincidence of circumstances favourable to his wishes, he was at length enabled to accomplish. He had already succeeded in corrupting the fidelity of one of her male domestics; and this man gave him all the treacherous assistance which he required, while the chance which gave him an opportunity of purchasing the lonely villa on the banks of Secchia, in the Modonese, furnished him with the most secure method of effecting the detention of the unfortunate countess and her attendants, in the manner already stated by that lady herself. Could the passion which Herman certainly felt for the countess be urged in some slight extenuation of the violence of his proceedings, it might be pleaded that he really loved her with a degree of constant tenderness which he had never manifested towards any other woman; but still there was that cruelty and perfidious art in his conduct which proved him to be a man of an unfeeling heart and abandoned principles, and therefore rendered him an object of hatred and abhorrence to the countess, whom, however, he

had resolved to compel to give him legal claims to her respect and obedience.

To such a man the determination of removing the Count di Mirandini from the world was not long a subject of uneasiness; and he planned the murder of this nobleman with emotions which partook more of the exultation of anticipated success than compunction and horror. The deluded domestic, whom he had so successfully seduced into betraying the countess into his power, was doubly criminal in having also consented to aid his vile employer in the destruction of his lord; and chiefly for this purpose he was dispatched into the Milanese, with a fabricated account of the death of the countess and her women, together with the infant daughter of the unfortunate Udinas; and with the still more horrible instructions to assassinate his master, when his grief at this cruel intelligence should incapacitate him from paying a proper regard to his own safety. This detestable plan was, however, entirely frustrated by the counter-plots of the Marchese di Rovenza. The moment the latter had read the copies of the Count and Countess di Mirandini's letters, he began to reflect in what manner he could best take advantage of the intelligence with which these epistles furnished him. It was now in his power to discover to the state inquisition where Mirandini secreted himself; but, on consideration, he

thought that could he procure the assassination of the count in the secluded spot in which he was concealed, the latter alternative would be far preferable, as he was now not wholly without a dread, that, should Di Mirandini be thrown into the power of the inquisition, some discovery might take place that would prove injurious to himself. He knew that merely to hint his wishes on this subject to Fabricio would be sufficient, as he always gave this man too much reason to be satisfied with the remuneration of services, to fear any objection. The marchese's usual penetration was not deficient in this instance; for no sooner did Fabricio comprehend that the death of Mirandini would be pleasing to his vile employer, than he signified his eager alacrity to undertake the execution of the horrid deed. This ready acquiescence, so acceptable to Rovenza, now encouraged him to add a farther intimation, that should any child be found along with the Count di Mirandini, it would be better to dispatch it also, than suffer it to live among strangers, unknown and unprotected. Fabricio, vile as he was, started at this implied command. He was not privy to the dreadful crimes which Rovenza had committed against the ruined family of Udina; but he knew that the child whom the Count di Mirandini had made the companion of his flight was the son of Costanza di Udina, and in one moment his keen and artful mind comprehended, in some mea-

sure, the cruel treachery of the marchese. That he had penetrated thus far, however, he carefully concealed; and, instantly recovering his usual manner, he bowed obedience to the intimation, and, in the course of a few days, set out, well provided for the horrible occasion. An accident, however, most providentially occurred to retard him on his journey.

A few miles from Sesto, he fell from his horse, and was so severely hurt, that he was confined above a fortnight with the dreadful bruises he had received. The solitude and regulated regimen to which he was now compelled, produced, for a short interval, some salutary impression upon his usually callous heart; and he ofttimes mentally resolved not to attempt the lives of the Count di Mirandini and the young Udina: but, alas! this was but the transient influences of the whisper of conscience heard on the pillow of illness; and with his recovery all his scruples vanished, and he pursued his journey with as little hesitation and remorse as he had commenced it. Again the hand of Providence defeated his design, and converted the criminal intention against the innocent into the punishment of the guilty.

When he arrived at the little hamlet, at no great distance from which stood the cottage in which the Count di Mirandini and his young charge had been so hospitably sheltered, fatigue induced him to remain there to rest all the night; and it was

at day-break on the following morning that the count with Orazio di Udina departed for Switzerland. Thus, at the very crisis of imminent danger, the good count escaped certain destruction.

Fabricio, obliged to wait till the evening before he durst make the intended attack, employed all the day in learning every particular with which the rustics could furnish him, relative to the stranger and his supposed child, who lodged at the cottage of old Paulo, the neat-herd, and heard, with diabolic satisfaction, of the melancholy and distracted rambles of the count among the rocks and caverns.

As soon as the evening mists crept along the deep-wooded glens, Fabricio stole forth, and, by the uncertain light of an early moon, proceeded towards the mouth of the cave. His search was not long apparently unsuccessful, as he soon beheld a figure much resembling the description which Rovenza had given him of the Count di Mirandini, emerge slowly from between the rugged cliffs. The stranger was seemingly engaged in examining the outside of a pocket-book which he held in his hand, and was so intent in his observation, that he heard not the stealing footstep of Fabricio, as he quickly glided after him, and stabbed him in the back. The stranger then turned, and endeavoured to defend himself; but, being totally unarmed, he could not long oppose his assailant, and at length, after a violent struggle,

fell dead at the feet of Fabricio, who immediately threw the body headlong down into the precipitous mouth of the cave. At this moment the finger of just fate conducted the treacherous servant of the Count di Mirandini to the spot. With a design similar to Fabricio's he was loitering among the rocks to surprise and assassinate his lord, after having affected to depart on his return homeward on the preceding day.

Fabricio, who saw in this man only the discoverer of his own guilt, and instantaneously determining to silence such an evidence of his crime, flew upon him with all the force and violence of despair, and soon killed him without receiving a single wound in return. The moment that this miserable being fell, Fabricio fled from the cliffs with all possible expedition, and taking a contrary direction from the hamlet, reached a retired hut where he had purposely left a disguise which he immediately assumed, and proceeded with the utmost precaution to Venice, which he reached in safety. Really believing that the stranger he had murdered was the Count di Mirandini, he did not hesitate to assure the marchese so; while, at the same time, he was obliged to acknowledge that he could not find any opportunity of terminating the existence of the young Udina, who, he had been informed, was always too well taken care of by the cottager's wife, for him to hope to

find any opportunity, at least for the present, of sending him into the other world. Fabricio, however, very artfully represented that as the Count di Mirandini was wholly unknown in the cottage, and as the child had passed as his own son, nobody might ever be able to discover who he really was, and that till he could be removed with safety, it would be best to suffer him to continue some time unsought for where he was.

The marchese was certainly aware that these representations were just, and therefore acceded to this advice, while he bestowed upon Fabricio the promised reward, and actually took him into his household in a subordinate station; from which, however, he was soon raised to the distinguished post of Rovenza's principal valet And, indeed, the marchese was now so circumstanced as to require all the aid which an artful and facile domestic so well knows how to give.

The wretched Costanza had now finished his earthly career in the awful prison of St. Mark; and the beauteous Veronica still laboured under all the horrors of confirmed mental derangement. Thus after having committed so many diabolic crimes to gratify his malicious and unjust hatred of the Udina family, and to indulge his guilty passion for the lovely sister of his wife, Rovenza found himself disappointed in the ardently hoped for reward of his crimes—the possession of Veronica. His

passion for this beautiful unfortunate became daily more violent, and he watched the melancholy effects of her derangement with an intense anxiety which so far absorbed every other feeling, that at length his senses began to yield at intervals to the impression, which the constant contemplation of her madness made on his mind. He was not, however, so much affected by this sympathetic delirium as to relinquish the pursuit of his designs; and imagining that were she removed to some solitary habitation, where local objects could not impress her imagination with those undefined but powerful recollections, which he believed contributed to fix and increase her complaint, there still existed a probability of her recovery. He soon resolved to have her privately conveyed to the Castle of Torcello, and likewise to contrive his plan in such a manner, as to make his lady and the domestics of the villa believe that the lovely maniac had strayed from her apartment, and had drowned herself in the Brenta.

Had this artful device been left wholly to the management of Fabricio it would in all probability have succeeded; but the marchese, fearful that some accidental circumstance might betray the active agency of his favorite valet, and by this means lead to a suspicion, or total discovery of the whole business, would not permit Fabricio to go himself at midnight to the chamber of Veronica and bear her to the boat

which was to convey her across the Brenta. His emissary was therefore obliged to hire a subordinate on whom he could well depend, to execute this part of the plot; but the benignant will of providence defeated this most cruel project. The man who was employed upon this occasion wore, as is usual with beings of his vile profession, a poisoned stiletto, which, as he stole to the apartment of Veronica, he hastily placed in his vest, and in stooping forward to raise her from the bed, on which she then lay in a state of composed apathy, it fell from his bosom, and in the effort he made to recover it, his foot became entangled in one of the valence ornaments, and he instantly fell in such a position that the stiletto. now firmly grasped in his hand, pierced the lovely neck of Veronica, and immediately deprived her of life.

Really shocked by the accident, and fearful of the consequences of his awkwardness, the man immediately fled from the apartment, and as effectual care had been taken that no person should be in the way to impede his return to the boat with the lovely victim, whom, it was not doubted, he could carry off with ease, he found no obstacle to stop his flight, and actually escaped in safety, not daring again to meet Fabricio, or confess to him the accidental failure of the stratagem.

Meanwhile Fabricio, surprised at the delay of the man, finding his patience entirely exhausted, proceeded to the cham-

ber of Veronica, where he soon discovered the inanimate form of the lovely woman weltering in her blood. Aghast at a sight which threatened his own destruction from the disappointed frenzy of the marchese, he was almost on the point of following the example of the unintentional assassin, of endeavouring by flight to save himself from the vengeful anger of his lord; but a moment's recollection evinced to him that he was too deeply entrusted and valued by Rovenza to have much cause for alarm; and therefore resolved to stay and attempt to reconcile him to the unfortunate affair as well as he could. The manner in which Rovenza received this awful disappointment of his guilty love has already been described by the Signora della Albina. For some time he was subject to the most severe of maladies, and in his frantic ravings but too clearly revealed the excess of that passion with which Veronica had inspired him; while many of his expressions gave fearful intimation of the commission of those crimes that he had practised against Costanza di Udina. By the care of Fabricio, however, the attendants were kept too much occupied to pay attention to the ravings of their lord; while the physicians, if they had any suspicion of the truth, chose rather to attribute his expressions to the impression made upon his mind by the misfortunes of his relations, than to hint their comprehension of circumstances, their knowledge of which could only involve

themselves in trouble and danger. The wild language of the marchese was, however, but too dreadfully impressive to the grief and horror-stricken heart of his amiable lady, who, although she certainly did not conceive the full extent of her lord's crimes, still found food sufficient for the most alarming and dreadful conjectures. These conjectures relative to the fate of Costanza di Udina, added to the knowledge of Rovenza's unfortunate passion for her sister, casued the marchesa to recoil from the idea of ever more residing with her lord; and, as has been before related, she left no rational effort untried to induce him to consent to a separation: but the marchese, as might naturally be expected, absolutely refused his assent to a procedure so truly calculated to excite surprise and enquiry in the world. However, he soon after set out on an excursion for the recovery of his health, and thus his lady was relieved from his society for a time. During this absence he visited the Milanese, and even made personal enquiries relative to the young Orazio di Udina among the rustics of the hamlet near the cottage in which the Count di Mirandini had resided with the child: but he could obtain no further intelligence than that which he had already received, namely, that the stranger at the cottage had quitted it with his son early one morning; and as the former was soon afterwards found murdered in the mouth of the cavern of the cottage,

and the latter had never afterwards been seen, it was generally supposed that the child had likewise perished.

Thus finding it impossible to obtain any satisfactory intelligence on this subject from the cottagers, the marchese proceeded to the Priory of San Ambrose, in the cemetery of which he knew the remains of the stranger had been laid, as those of the count. On being introduced to the prior, he made the most particular enquiries respecting the young Udina, but was here equally unsuccessful in gaining any information which might direct his search after the child. He nevertheless took care before he departed, to interest highly both the prior and the community on the subject, and, by the splendor of his gifts to the shrine of their patron saint, ensured to himself their utmost respect; and received the most solemn promises that they would unremittingly exert themselves to discover the real fate of the child. Leaving the prior and the brotherhood deeply impressed with the idea of his extraordinary piety and humanity, the marchese proceeded on his tour, and at Turin was joined by his faithful Fabricio, who durst not attend him in his excursion on the banks of Lago Maggiore lest he should there recognized as the murderer of the Count di Mirandini.

Rovenza, now aided by the advice and assistance of this vile coadjutor, began to consider in what manner he could best

proceed in order to remove the infant daughter of Udina from the Countess di Mirandini, who, he knew, was still held a prisoner by Herman de Weilburgh in the Modenese. After many plans projected and refused, he at length determined to travel into the Modenese, obtain an interview with the Count de Weilburgh, and, after promising not to interfere in his detention of the Countess di Mirandini, claim the infant Veronica. In pursuance of this resolve, he proceeded into the Modenese, and wrote to Herman de Weilburgh requesting him to meet him at a small village about a league distant from the villa.

The count readily attended him; but was by no means pleased when he discovered that Rovenza was perfectly acquainted with his unjust detention of the Countess di Mirandini. Herman de Weilburgh had, however, sufficient penetration to perceive that the marchese, in requiring the infant Veronica to be delivered into his hands, was not actuated by humanity, and that some deep, secret motive of self-interest had induced him to urge this request. In consequence of this observation he secretly determined not to yield up the child to the marchese, but to retain it as a check which might prevent Rovenza from any future interference respecting the countess, for he could not prevail upon himself to consider the marchese's promise of secrecy and indifference as likely to prove very obligatory when he should

have obtained the object which had induced him to give such unasked for assurances. Pleading, therefore, the impracticability of removing the child from the countess, without being able to inform her to whose care he had consigned her, and obliquely hinting his own suspicions that some secret view had impelled the marchese to require the child, he seriously excused himself from complying, but, at the same time, gave the most vehement promise to take every possible care of the little Veronica, and to resign her the moment that the Countess di Mirandini should consent to become his wife.

After many unavailing arguments, the marchese was compelled to acquiesce, and in order to hold De Weilburgh to his engagements, gave him assurances of inviolable friendship, and even offered to favour his views relative to the countess, declaring at the same time that nothing could be more just than to compel her to a union every way so calculated to ensure her happiness. This mutual league of art and interest being concluded, and a plan of occasional correspondence settled between them, the marchese and the Count de Weilburgh separated, the one to pursue his tour and the other to return to the villa.

Rovenza now feeling himself in some degree secure of being master of the destinies of these hapless orphans, should Orazio ever be found, or at least of obtaining possession of the little Veronica,

planned his scheme of removing his own children from beneath the protection of their amiable mother, with the design of placing them in such situations where they should receive an education better suited to his future projects for their aggrandizement, than he believed they could receive from the marchesa, or the instructors selected by her, whose mild and unassuming virtues he did not wish them to imbibe, lest their want of ambitious pride should render them averse to any interested union which he should wish them to form. How far this ill-judged plan succeeded the sequel will prove: it has, however, already been seen that the caracters of both Leonardo and Ottavania received no advantage from such an erroneous system.

These projects, and the anticipation of their execution, which engaged the attention of the marchese, added to the diversity of scene which his tour presented, certainly contributed to his recovering some portion of health; but his passion for Veronica had been too deeply indulged ever to be erased from his mind, and at times transient fits of delirium but too truly proved that his imagination, if not his conscience, was violently affected by the recollection of the past.

On his return from his tour, and after having sent the young Leonardo and Ottavania to the places he had selected as their future residences, Rovenza had no other concerns to call him particularly

into action, and, for a few months, he endeavoured to establish his character as a man of noble and benevolent mind, equally pious, munificent and charitable. In this he soon succeeded, but, with his usual policy, he did not attempt to alter the manner which had always distinguished him, and while people lamented his personal and apparently mental defects, they even in the same breath extolled his admirable virtues. By his household, however, he was rather revered than beloved, for, in his private hours, he sometimes betrayed traits of character which reached not the eye of the world. But to the marchesa only was he more fully known than he suspected himself to be. The anxious and accurate study of his real disposition, she had considered as an important duty, from the moment when his delirious ravings had suggested to her enhorrored mind the possibility that he had taken some dreadful share in the fate of Udina; and, in the trembling hope of finding her alarming surmises erroneous, she paid the most rigid attention to his every word and action.—It is true, that during a long investigation, she discovered nothing that could absolutely authorize her to believe him to have been guilty of those crimes which the language, dictated by the wandering imaginations of insanity, had led her to fear he had committed; but still she but too truly perceived in him some general indications of consummate duplicity, un-

feeling coldness, and a pride which, although veiled by affected humility, was secretly predominant in his heart.

These observations undoubtedly tended to increase the mournful distrust and involuntary dread, with which the marchese's conduct had inspired her; but it was not till above two years after his return from his tour, that she was really convinced that he merited some of her unfavourable suspicious. The Count de Weilburgh, at this period, arrived for a short time at Venice, and became a frequent visitor at the Pallazo di Rovenza.

It was during one of those intervals when business compelled him to leave the villa, where he kept in concealment the Countess di Mirandini. The Marchesa di Rovenza had frequently seen the count while the avowed lover of Hortensia di Bernini while she was on the visit with her father at Padua; and was acquainted with the motives which had induced the Count di Bernini to break off the projected match between Herman and his daughter.

The unfavourable accounts which the marchesa had at that time heard respecting the Count de Weilburgh, had already impressed her with an ill opinion of him, and his manner, during his visits to the Pallazo di Rovenza, were not calculated to remove that opinion It is true, he was perfectly well bred, and displayed many accomplishments, but there were half concealed traits of immorality and dissipation which were

sometimes perceptible through the disguise of his affected demeanour, which convinced the marchesa that he was in reality a very worthless character. The close intimacy which appeared to subsist between her lord and the count soon excited her surprise and observation; and it was not long ere she had reason to believe that some secret mystery had made them form a friendship, which, as she considered Rovenza's usual reserve and taciturnity, seemed to her to be so extraordinary. Accident at length revealed to her this suspected mystery. The Count de Weilburgh was obliged to make a sudden journey into Germany, and he departed from Venice in rather an abrupt manner. He had been gone but a fortnight, when one night as she was retiring to her own apartment, in passing along the principal corridor, she perceived a letter lying on the floor: involuntarily she took it up, and her action was so quick and instantaneous, that she was not observed by the female attendants who waited on her to her room. As soon as she was alone, she eagerly examined the cover of the letter, and found that it was directed to the marchese. For a moment she hesitated ere she opened it, but at length her anxiety to peruse the epistle became so extreme, that she could not resist the temptation. The first words informed her that the letter was written by the Count de Weilburgh, and its whole contents overwhelmed her with the utmost terror and amazement; for she

now discovered every thing relative to the situation of the long-supposed deceased Countess di Mirandini, and that the orphan daughter of her sister was also still in existence. De Weilburgh had written in the most unguarded manner: he complained of the unceasing coldness of the countess; lamented the opposition she still continued to make to his wishes; spoke of the fondness with which she cherished both her own little daughter, and the young Veronica, and repeated his assurance that he would deliver up the latter to the marchese, as soon as the countess became his wife. He then proceeded to expatiate on the plans he meditated to induce the hapless countess to yield to his will; and added, that at all events she must still continue at the villa in the Modenese.— Although the marchesa could not fully comprehend every part of this epistle, yet she understood sufficient to explain to her all the misery and danger of the countess's situation, and to enable her to penetrate, in some measure, into the marchese's designs respecting the infant Veronica, of whom the count certainly spoke as of one who appeared to be an obstacle to some unknown plan of Rovenza. The allusions and inuendoes which Herman had, for some reason best known to himself, thought proper to make on this subject, renewed all the marchesa's direful suspicions of her lord's having been most cruel and treacherous to the hapless Costanza; and,

while the chill of enhorrored apprehension stole over her frame, she involuntarily trembled at the alarming suggestions of her mind respecting the but too probable destiny of her infant niece; nor was she now without suspicion that the fate of Di Mirandini, and that of the young Orazio, had been darkly mysterious.

When the perturbation, occasioned by her perusal of this singular letter, had, in some degree, subsided, she began to consider whether there existed any possibility of her being able to save the Countess di Mirandini and the young Veronica from the dangers which threatened both, and at length Providence suggested to her those methods which eventually succeeded.

During the absence of the marchese on his tour, Guispardo, the old and faithfully attached domestic of the Count di Mirandini, it may be recollected, had travelled from Tuscany to Venice, to obtain some intelligence of his revered lord. This good old man, on applying to the Marchesa di Rovenza, had learned from her the supposed fate of the family to which he was so truly attached; and after having received every consolation which the sympathetic pity and goodness of the amiable marchesa could impart, he had returned into Tuscany, to linger out the remnant of his sorrowful days in his native village, far from the stately residences of his deceased lord, and which he could not endure to behold in the possession of another. In

the first moments of reflection, the marchesa thought of this faithful being as the fittest person to be employed in the execution of her project to release the countess from the power of De Weilburgh; but when she considered what a delay must occur in sending for Guispardo from a remote village in Tuscany, she turned her thoughts towards another person, in whom she was certain she could safely confide.—This person was the merchant Corvino, who so frequently afterwards visited the cottage of the Signora di Berlotti, under the assumed name of the Signor Malvezzi. That he was really worthy of her confidence she was well assured, and she did not long hesitate in determining to employ him on the occasion. Her humane plan thus adjusted, it occurred to her that should the marchese miss the letter which had revealed to her so much, and discover it to be in her possession, disappointment and ruin must prove the fatal result; and therefore she immediately perceived the necessity of leaving it where she had found it, or of dropping it near the door of his apartment.

The apprehension that it might be taken up, and opened by any of the domestics of the pallazo, for a moment distressed her, but as it was not very probable that any one of the servants durst hazard such a breach of trust with a master, who was so severely particular in some respects, she at length stole from her room, and left the

letter exactly in the same spot where she had found it, and returned to her apartment, where she passed the remainder of the night in considering the safest methods to be adopted for the success of her sheme:—in weeping the fate of those dear lamented relatives, whose loss had deprived her for ever of happiness, and in praying for the repose of the deceased, and the welfare of the survivors.

CHAP. VI.

At breakfast on the following morning the marchese first missed the letter of the Count de Weilburgh; and, in a few minutes, all the domestics were summoned to his presence. After the most strict enquiries, a minute search was commenced, and this dreaded letter was speedily recovered. Happily for the marchesa, she was not present during this disagreeable scene. Unable to bear the presence of her lord immediately after the discovery she had made, she used the plea of indisposition as an excuse for confining herself entirely to her own apartment, where he was unaccustomed to enter. Indeed, from the period of his return from his tour, he had not failed to observe that his lady involuntarily shrunk from his society and attentions, and, in making this observation, his pride had induced him to forbear every

attempt of conciliating her regard. Thus mutually acquiescing in a state of separation, they seldom beheld each other, but in the splendid saloons appropriated to the reception of company.

A few hours after the recovery of his letter, the marchese set off, attended by Fabricio, to pass some days at a retired villa, where he kept a young woman, whom he had, some months back, seduced from her parents; and the marchesa, now well assured that he would not return till the appointed time, felt herself perfectly at liberty to pursue her plan respecting the deliverance of the Countess di Mirandini and her own niece. The merchant Corvino was in the habit of attending at the pallazo at intervals, in order to receive benevolent assistance for such worthy indigent persons as he thought deserving the bounty of the amiable marchesa, and under pretence of employing him on one of these charitable occasions, he was now summoned to a private interview with that lady. Corvino, possessing good sense, a comprehensive intellect, and a humane and generous heart, entered into the marchesa's views with all the zeal and alacrity which she had expected him to display, and undertook to remove the countess, with the children and attendants, to any place she should appoint for their reception. The marchesa instantly fixed on the convent of Santa Benedicta, the lady superior of which was a relation, and the best beloved friend

of her late mother, and who, she well knew, would receive and conceal the fugitives on her application for the purpose. The merchant, liberally supplied by the marchesa with the means of carrying the plan into execution, now departed to find the persons whom he believed he could best depend upon as his agents in this affair; and in less than three days they set off for the Modenese, properly instructed how to act.

That these people exerted themselves with equal dexterity and prudence, was soon well evinced by the success of the little plot; to which, however, the fortunate absence of the Count de Weilburgh, from the villa, contributed considerably. Most anxiously did the good marchesa await the return of these confidential agents of Corvino. As soon as she learnt that the countess, the children, and attendants, were all safe in the convent of Santa Benedicta, her gratitude to heaven was as unbounded as sincere; nor did she fail to reward those employed upon the occasion, in a manner the most munificent and generous. It was not, however, the intention of the marchesa that the Countess di Mirandini should continue long in the convent, but the events which occurred on the discovery of her flight from the villa of the Count de Weilburgh, made it advisable that she should not be removed without the utmost precaution.

About a week after the removal of the

countess, the Count de Weilburgh returned to the villa. An intuitive presentiment of what had occurred during his absence, had induced him to leave Germany in the utmost haste; but he arrived too late to prevent the result he dreaded. His rage and distraction on finding all his prisoners fled was beyond description excessive. Every method which his fertile imagination could suggest, to trace and discover the fugitives, or who had assisted their escape, being in vain, he was compelled to have recourse to the publication of a fraud, which his foresight, and dread of the future, had induced him to commit. After the supposed death of the Count di Mirandini, he had used every argument which art could urge in order to prevail upon the countess to give him her hand; and finding, at length, that all his entreaties and persuasions were unavailing, he determined on a scheme which would at least put him into possession of the countess's hereditary estates in Tuscany. He had seduced the orphan daughter of a peasant who resided within a few leagues of the villa, and the unhappy girl, distracted by grief and remorse for the error into which love had plunged her, and unacquainted with the rank of her lover, incessantly implored him to marry her; a request which Weilburgh never absolutely refused to comply with, as the young woman was beautiful, and still interested him, but continued to deceive her with such evasions and delays as

were best calculated to render her less miserable by inspiring her with hope. In the dilemma in which he now found himself by the resolute rejection of the Countess di Mirandini, it occurred to him to marry this girl privately, under the name of the countess, and by being thus enabled to bring legal testimonies of an apparent union with the latter, either compel her to become his wife in reality, or, by confining her for life, hold unmolested possession of her property. As to the unfortunate young woman whom he was thus imposing upon, he entertained no apprehensions, as he felt convinced that he could remove her, whenever he should think proper, far out of the way, were she likely to prove an obstacle to his future designs. The more he reflected on this plan, the more practicable and pleasing it appeared to him, and he soon resolved not to delay its execution. In consequence of this determination, he informed the simple Lauretta that he would marry her, provided she would assume a name which was more suitable to such an union, than the rustic one she bore; and would promise not to make any observation on, or reply to any thing he should say, in the presence of the priest who was to unite them. To account for all this, he told her that he was in reality a nobleman, and had important reasons for not chusing that it should be known he had married a female of a rank inferior to his own. The affectionate, simple, and confiding Lauretta

gratefully promised obedience to his wishes and instructions.

A few nights afterwards she was arrayed in a rich habit, adapted to her supposed rank, and, closely veiled, conveyed to the chapel of a convent not far from the villa; where, as the Countess di Mirandini, she became the wife of her seducer. De Weilburgh took care to address her several times by the name of Mirandini, previous to the marriage ceremony being performed, and the timid Lauretta unhesitatingly answered to the appellation. Thus it is not surprising that he should afterwards be able to produce such apparently unquestionable proofs of his union with the countess.

The poor Lauretta, happy in the consciousness of being the wife of the man she loved, returned to the cottage, in which she resided with an aged grand-mother, whose faculties were too much impaired by age for her to have discovered what was passing, and again devoted herself to the fulfilment of those filial tendernesses and duties which she delighted to perform. Surrounded with rustic plenty, and possessing from De Weilburgh the amplest means of contributing every possible comfort to the expiring days of her grand-mother, Lauretta was easily persuaded not to breathe the slightest hint of her marriage till she should have permission so to do; but De Weilburgh's time of dependence upon her prudence was not of any

long continuance, as the hapless girl died in less than three months after this fraudful union, in giving birth to the offspring of her imprudent connection, and which perished with its youthful mother. This event, which was, in a few days afterwards, followed by the death of the grand-mother, entirely freed De Weilburgh from all apprehensions that the imposition he had practised would ever be discovered; and he continued his proceedings with all the boldness which is derived from conscious security.

Immediately on his discovery of the flight of his prisoners from the villa, he avowed this pretended union with the Countess di Mirandini, and proved the circumstance at Florence. As De Weilburgh, from the time of his losing the countess, had openly mentioned her as his wife, and the affair had become public, he wrote to Rovenza the whole account, vehemently regretting the loss also of the young Veronica. Nothing could exceed the deep, malicious, heartfelt rage of the marchese on this occasion. A thousand times he execrated his own folly in not having devised some scheme to get the child into his own power; not that he absolutely dreaded retribution from the little orphaned exile, but still a secret voice seemed to whisper to his heart that those children, should they live, would at some future period be, by some means, his own ruin. To aid De Weilburgh in his re-

searches after the Countess di Mirandini, was now his only alternative, and, dissembling his anger, he wrote the Count de Weilburgh every assurance of service; and, in fact, employed every possible method of discovering the fugitives, but without success. In this affair, the usual craft of Rovenza did not forsake him. He well knew that, as his lady might soon become acquainted with the whole business from public report, it would be better for him to inform her of it, and express the utmost astonishment on the occasion. De Weilburgh had written that the countess was his wife, and had used a thousand excuses for not delivering up Veronica.—This appeared mysterious to Rovenza. He could not believe that the countess, after having given him her hand voluntarily, would ever fly from him; but Rovenza was compelled to leave this enigma, which was beyond his penetration, to be elucidated by time. To the marchesa he at length related that his friend had written him a most extraordinary confession respecting the Countess di Mirandini, and, affecting to credit the tale of her being his wife, condemned her whole conduct as highly culpable, and avowed a resolution of taking the little Veronica from her protection, and placing her in a foreign convent. Ingenuous as the marchese affected to be in this business, the marchesa was too guarded to confide in him, and therefore heard, in silence and apparent asto-

nishment, the tale he related. From this period the marchese constantly informed the marchesa of all De Weilburgh's public proceedings in Tuscany respecting the countess, and thus she was enabled to send accurate accounts of all that occurred to the convent of Santa Benedicta.

Convinced, however, in a very short time, that the Countess di Mirandini could not openly appear in the world without subjecting herself to all the artful dominion of De Weilburgh, and perceiving from the tenor of her letters, that a life of retirement and rural seclusion would be the most pleasing to her mind, this amiable woman determined to seek out a residence such as she imagined the countess would approve, and accordingly wrote to her on the subject.

The reply of the countess, avowing her wish of fixing her future residence close to the spot where her beloved Mirandini was supposed to have been murdered, appeared extraordinary to the marchesa, but as she possessed a mind capable of comprehending all the mournful tenderness and regret which had dictated such a wish, she did not oppose it. The merchant Corvino was then employed to look out for some suitable habitation on that part of the banks of the Lago Maggiore; but as no cottage stood there at that time, the marchesa, on being informed so, resolved to erect one for the reception of her *protegées*. For this purpose a careful superintendant

was wanted. To summon the good Guispardo from Tuscany, and confide this affair to him, seemed to the marchesa to be the best plan she could possibly fix upon. This faithful domestic eagerly obeyed the request of the Marchesa di Rovenza to see him in Venice. His heart whispered to him that he was to receive some tidings of a pleasing nature, and the knowledge that the lady of his beloved and noble master still lived, seemed to impart new vigour to his life. He fulfilled the tasks allotted to him with equal care, prudence and fidelity, and proved himself in every respect worthy the trust reposed in him.

The removal of the Countess di Mirandini to this cottage has already been related by that lady herself, and it is known that her mysterious visitant, the Signor Malvezzi, was no other than the merchant Corvino: it now remains to explain how Ursulina, after leaving the countess, became an inhabitant of the castle of Torcello. The man whom she so hastily married, and who had been admitted into the cottage as the wounded servant of a traveller who had been murdered among the cliffs, was, in reality the assassin himself. Incapable of flight from the wounds he had received from the traveller, who had made a formidable resistance, this wretch had the art to claim assistance as an honest man, and on being so charitably admitted to shelter and relief, he took advantage of the unsuspicious goodness of the countess to seduce

Ursulina, who, however, was but too much inclined to listen to any person who thought it worth his while to amuse himself with her folly. From her he discovered that the lady was in possession of some jewels and other valuables, and he immediately formed the design of making himself master of them. On the night before his intended day of marriage with Ursulina, he accordingly made his attack, and entered the room of the signora, but so disguised in his complexion and hair as not to be recognised by her. His fear of detection, however, on her awakening, induced him to attempt to stab her, but he missed his aim, and killed the infant Veronica. After this act, he certainly would have fled from the cottage that moment, but while he even aimed the dagger at her bosom, so unsuspicious was the countess of who was the robber, that in her fright, she called on Ursulina, and himself by name, to come and save her from the ruffian.—Her cries to him for help assured this desperado that she knew him not, and, as he was certain of receiving a sum of money with the foolish Ursulina, he resolved to brave the result of staying at the cottage; and in the morning appeared before the countess with so much apparent astonishment, innocence and concern in his looks, that not the slightest suspicion fell on him.

He carried Ursulina to Venice after their marriage, and there he soon deserted her, leaving her in a house where her principles

were so entirely corrupted, that she adopted a life of compleat infamy, 'till age compelled her again to have recourse to servitude, in the employ of the wretches who followed the same occupation she had done.

It was after an interval of ten years, that accident threw her into the way of Fabricio, the Marchese di Rovenza's valet; and after some conversation, this man, to his extreme surprise, discovered that she had lived in the service of the Countess di Mirandini, and at the very period when his master and the Count de Weilburgh had so unsuccessfully employed every method that could be advised to discover her retreat. Much persuasion was not required to induce Ursulina to reveal all she knew, and in a few hours the secret of the countess's residence on the banks of the lago Maggiore, was made known to the Marcheese di Rovenza, who immediately had an interview with Ursulina, and made her fully relate every circumstance with which he wished to be acquainted. Assured now that the poor little Veronica had long since ceased to exist, he felt no farther care on that subject, and he immediately determined to send to the Count de Weilburgh, who was then at one of his estates in Germany, an account of the discovery he had made of the Countess di Mirandini's retreat. Thinking that the testimony of Ursulina might be of some service to the count, the marchese immediately removed this miserable being from the infamous recep-

tacle in which he found her, and placed her under the care of people who were to keep a strict watch upon all her actions till the arrival of the Count de Weilburgh. This circumstance occurred in Venice, about the period when Orazio di Udina first made his appearence at the cottage of the countess, on the banks of the Lago Maggiore.

When the Marchese di Rovenza had sent off proper messengers to the Count de Weilburgh, he proceeded, incognito, to the Priory of San Ambrose, to make some enquiries respecting the supposed Signora di Berlotti and her family. He was received by the Prior Ascollini, who, at the time of the Marchese's first visit, was one of the brotherhood only, and soon discovered him a man exactly suited to his purpose; for the prior certainly could conceal a secret if self-interest required him not to divulge it. In this case, he unfortunately, though without being conscious of it, gave the marchese some intelligence of the utmost importance—that is, he informed him of Orazio's introduction to the cottage of the signora. The name of Orazio, and the manner in which the Signora di Berlotti was represented to have behaved to this young man, instantly suggested to the marchese that this unknown must really be the orphan son of Costanza di Udina. Under this conviction, Rovenza would not have hesitated a moment in contriving some scheme for the assassination of this dreaded

object, had not Ascollini's assurances, that there was every reason to believe that Orazio was strongly connected with Angelo and his friends, presented the hope of accomplishing his destruction by safer means. All that could be done for the present was to bribe the prior to his interest and to prevail upon him to keep a strict watch on the young Orazio—accordingly the marchese presented Ascollini with such gifts as soon rendered the latter favourable to his wishes; and he accepted a commission so agreeable to his inclinations with every demonstration of satisfaction. Rovenza, however, too well penetrated the character of the prior to venture as yet to entrust him too far; and therefore he merely informed him, that as he suspected that the Signora di Berlotti was a lady who had formerly been known to him, and concerning whom he felt a peculiar interest, he was desirous of being made acquainted with every thing relating to her, that his suspicions on the subject might either be confirmed or removed. Ascollini, truly vexed that he was not so much in the confidenee of the signora as to have it in his power to give this splendidly generous stranger every intelligence he would desire to receive, now promised to be indefatigable in his observations, and to send him the earliest information of every event that occurred at the cottage. Assured that he might in this respect, depend upon the fidelity of the prior, the marchese returned to Venice,

to await the arrival of the Count de Weilburgh, and to project with the iniquitous agent of his schemes, how he should proceed respecting Orazio. Fabricio, however, could not give any decisive advice on this point, for as he was well acquainted with the character of Angelo Guicciardini, and, like Ascollini, was not inclined to doubt the probability that he might indeed be privately the friend of this unfortunate orphan, he readily imagined that any attack upon the life of the young man would be attended with considerable hazard and danger. He reminded his lord that Orazio would not dare to present himself in Venice under his own name, and if he ventured thither under any appellation, there would be no difficulty in discovering and betraying him into the hands of those powers, who would most rigourosly inflict upon him the penalty of his temerity. All this appeared highly probable: yet Rovenza could not feel entirely secure or satisfied but in the idea of Orazio's death: though how to accomplish this event, he could not at present decide.

Whilst the marchese and his vile emissary were employed in plotting how to add another enormous crime to those they had already committed, and were waiting with impatience the arrival of the Count de Weilburgh, the marchesa received the anonymous letter which informed her that the orphan son of her sister still existed,

and which also entreated for him her private friendship and support.

Although the marchesa certainly knew not whom to suspect as the writer of this singular letter, yet she almost imagined that the author of it was in some slight degree acquainted with the disposition of the marchese, from the circumstance of their so earnestly recommending her not to reveal the secret to her lord, till such time as it should be in the power of Orazio to bring forth such proofs of the identity of his birth, and the justice of his claims, as should leave the marchese without excuse for opposition. The motive urged for this intimation was the idea that the marchese might be disinclined to resign the Udina estates which he had so long held, a supposition seemingly founded on the rational knowledge of the world, but which the marchesa was almost tempted to believe originated in a better acquaintance with Rovenza's real character, than her anonymous correspondent chose so soon to avow. At all events, she determined to follow the advice it contained; and she therefore used every possible precaution to conceal from the marchese the information she had thus received.

The assurance that Orazio lived, filled her mind with grateful astonishment, as she considered the inscrutable decrees of that Providence which watches over the orphan and friendless; yet still she trembled at the anticipation of what might be the

result of his intended appeal to the senate of Venice. It now appeared to her, however, that her lord could not have had the dreadful share she had once been led to suspect he had in the death of Udina; else, she supposed, no friend, who was acquainted with the nature of the proof which Orazio could bring forward in evidence of his father's guiltlessness, would venture to address her in his behalf. Thus freed from the apprehension that Orazio's appeal would involve her husband or her children in disgrace and danger, the amiable marchesa expected, with intense anxiety, the moment which was to introduce her nephew to her view. The loss of wealth, which was threatened by the possibility of Orazio's success, gave her not one moment's uneasiness: she regretted not that splendour which could only be supported by injustice: and from the observation which she had made on the characters of both her son and her daughter, who had now been at home about four months, she had no cause to repine at the idea of their being deprived of the means of supporting a species of proud extravagance; to the indulgence of which they both seemed to be but too much inclined. It has already been related, that Leonardo and Ottavania were habituated to consider their amiable mother as an unimportant object, to whom they owed neither attention nor obedience. That they should think thus had been the aim of their

father's plan for their education; and their instructors had not failed to impress their minds with sentiments conformable to the wishes of their employer, whose foolish self-opinion induced him to forget that they who were early rendered unmindful of their duty to *one* parent, could scarcely be expected to fulfil it to the *other*. This was the result which, in fact, occurred, and Rovenza soon discovered his error. This discovery, however, by no means inclined him to relax his authority. He perceived, almost immediately on their arrival at his pallazo, that Leonardo and Ottavania, especially, were as ambitious and proud as they could possibly be; but these very defects gave an air of insolent independence to their manner, which extremely mortified and displeased him, and which he soon contrived to confine within some proper limits, by an exertion of coldness, severity, and such restriction, as were best calculated to render it at least the *interest* of his son and daughter to treat *himself* with every possible appearance of respect and deference. The reward of this kind of duteous attention and obedience, was a full indulgence of every whim and caprice which they could form. The consequence was, that Leonardo speedily plunged into every dissipation which Venice could privately afford, and Ottavania enjoyed a latitude of manners, which required all the rank and consequence of her father to render

in a degree tolerated. In vain did the marchesa entreat and represent to her lord the ill consequences which must eventually result from such a system:—in vain did she seek opportunities to inspire her son with those sentiments of affection and duty toward herself, which she hoped might act as some curb on his imprudence, or attempt, by amiable example and precepts, to lead her daughter into those paths of propriety and delicacy, in which she had ever walked herself—Leonardo, immersed in pleasure, was scarcely ever to be seen, and Ottavania openly laughed at arguments so novel to her, averring, that as she was conscious she should never degrade herself by any act of criminality, she certainly should not endeavour to conform to the silly prejudices which made her country-women a set of mere automatons. The afflicted marchesa was at length compelled to yield so unavailing a contest, and still sought in the society of her valued friend, the Signora della Albina, that peace and consolation which the friendship of the latter had invariably afforded her. The signora was, indeed, most deserving of the esteem and confidence reposed in her, and the marchesa had no reserve with that lady, who, as she now always resided with her, was of course acquainted with every secret of her heart. With this amiable friend then, did the marchesa deeply bewail the errors of her unfortunate children, and to

her did she confide the secret of Orazio di Udina's expected appearance and intentions.

At length the arrival of the Count de Weilburgh in Venice, and his immediate visit at the pallazo di Rovenza, drew the attention of the marchesa and her friend from their own reflections. The evident mystery, the agitation of the looks of both the marchesa and the count; their long and private conference, immediately after the arrival of the latter, suggested involuntary suspicions that all was not right, and, to her utter dismay, the marchesa soon learnt, that the count had discovered the secret of the retreat of the Countess di Mirandini. De Weilburgh, who, of late years, had been much addicted to habits of intoxication, betrayed in a moment of inebriety, the information he had obtained on this subject, and also his intention of almost immediately forcing the countess from the tranquil seclusion she had so long enjoyed undisturbed. Although much shocked by this event, the marchesa was truly grateful to Heaven, for the opportunity thus afforded her, of informing the countess of the danger which threatened her; and accordingly she sent off the merchant Corvino to the cottage. Happily for the marchesa, she was at this time ignorant that Orazio di Udina was at the cottage; else the dread and anxiety which she suffered for the countess, would have been

greatly augmented by apprehensions for his safety.

Corvino had set off for the Milanese only a few hours, when the Count de Weilburgh departed on the same route; and on the day following, the marchese left Venice, on a pretended visit to a friend at Milan, but, in reality, on a very different occasion, and which was as follows. After many secret conferences with Fabricio, previous to the arrival of de Weilburgh, on the possibility of ridding himself of all farther uneasiness on Orazio's account, it occurred to Rovenza that, in all probability, the latter might be at the cottage of the countess, at the very time when de Weilburgh should make his attempt to carry off herself and her daughter; and should such be the case, it presented a most favourable opportunity of depriving the young Udina of life; as he would then be supposed to have perished by the hands of the men employed by the count. The very first idea of this plan inspired the marchese with the most malignant satisfaction, and even his agent acknowledged the facility and safety which it presented. The only obstacle which seemed to oppose its execution, was the difficulty of procuring any person, who could be depended upon, to single out Orazio, and particularly assail his life. Rovenza was too cautious to think, even for a moment, of entrusting de Weilburgh with the secret of Orazio's be-

ing still in existence: much less would he confide to him his designs on the life of the youth. After some hesitation, he at length ventured to ask, whether Fabricio himself would undertake the horrid deed. Fabricio, although he did not in reality entertain any such apprehensions, objected to the possibility of his being recognized and detected, as the person who had killed the Count di Mirandini. The marchese, in reply, represented that, after such a lapse of time, this could not justly be dreaded. He then promised a far more brilliant reword than any by which he had repaid his former service, and Fabricio suffered his apparent fears and reluctance to be overcome. His consent to perpetrate this diabolic act being thus obtained, Rovenza indulged the most sanguine expectations of success, and at the first interview with de Weilburgh, offered him the assistance of Fabricio; in his visit to the cottage of the Countess di Mirandini, an aid which the count eagerly accepted, as he knew the man to be equally resolute, daring, and cunning. When their mode of proceeding was fully arranged, Fabricio set off, under a pretended commission to a friend of the marchese's at Verona, but in reality to await the arrival of the count at an appointed place, where he was to join him in disguise; and on the day following de Weilburgh himself departed from Venice for the Milanese. Every thing now seemed to promise the abominable

Rovenza the full completion of this new act of enormity: but the prospect of success was not sufficient to lull him into such a state of security as to make him unmindful of the means to prevent any suspicion attaching to himself, and to avoid all danger of this, he determined on a scheme, which to common comprehensions seem of all others the most likely to expose himself to certain danger of detection; and this was to make a journey into the Milanese, with the avowed design of taking a tour of the Lago Maggiore. Accordingly, on the day after the Count de Weilburgh had quitted Venice, Rovenza set off on this excursion. From Padua he travelled with the utmost expedition to Sesto, and proceeded immediately to the house of a gentleman with whom he was well acquainted. Here he left his carriage and retinue, and, attended only by two servants, visited the Priory of San Ambrose. He was received by the Prior Ascollini with all the servile adulation which rank and wealth command from the interested and designing; but what was his inward rage and disappointment, when he learnt that Orazio had, on the preceding day, suddenly disappeared, and that he had been an inmate of the priory above three weeks. In the first moments of the surprise and involuntary alarm which this intelligence occasioned him, he rather warmly reproached Ascollini, for not having written to him information of that cir-

cumstance. The prior, in reply, assured him that he would not have failed to send him such information, could he have suspected that the youth would have made so precipitate a retreat. "But," added he, "I understood your excellenza was more particularly anxious to hear somewhat respecting the Signora di Berlotti, than for any account of this strange Orazio; and I waited to gain some certain insight into her story, before I would venture to address you. I regret to say, that I have not, as yet, been able to discover any thing of importance relative to her. Yet I must observe, that her imprudent countenance of this mysterious young man, who is, without doubt, nothing better than one of the bandit associates to the robber Angelo Guicciardini, presents no very favourable indication of her former character." Ascolini then proceeded to inform the marchese of the Count Ferbonino's visit to the cottage and the piory; declaring at the same time, that although the signora had assured him that this stranger was really a nobleman, he could not believe him to be such, as he would not reveal to him his name, and had used so much mystery in his interview with Orazio.

Dreadfully agitated by the relation of this circumstance, which now convinced him that Orazio had some powerful and secret friends, who were interested for him, and to whom he was undoubtedly known, the marchese could scarcely command sufficient

composure to conceal what was passing in his mind; and while he affected to coincide in the opinion of the prior, respecting Orazio's being one of Angelo's companions, he yet asked so many questions relative to the stranger who had visited him at the priory, that Ascollini soon discovered, that he felt more interested on the young man's account, than he chose to confess. In consequence of this observation, he attempted many apologies for his omission in not having written; but the marchese was not in a frame of mind to admit these excuses, and, fearing to betray too much displeasure on the occasion, he begged to be immediately accommodated with an apartment for the night, to which he immediately retired. He passed the night in all the agitated incertitude which disappointment and fear could inspire, and, determining to entrust Ascollini no further, he departed at the dawn, after a very cold adieu to the disconcerted prior, who now bitterly regretted his having disobliged so munificent a patron.

When the marchese left the priory, it was his intention to return immediately to Sesto, but, as he accidentally took the road leading past the cottage of the countess, he was compelled to pause by the cries of Lodelli, who, it may be remembered, was bound to a tree in the garden by the ruffians who had carried off her lady and Guispardo. The moment Rovenza heard her shrieks, he conjectured where he was,

and perceiving, through the myrtle-hedge enclosure, her situation, instantly felt assured that the plan of de Weilburgh had succeeded. To his ready comprehension, this incident seemed to present the means of evincing his ignorance of the Count de Weilburgh's designs, and he proceeded to release the trembling Lodelli, who soon, while most vociferously bewailing the fate of her lady and Guispardo, informed him of what had happened, with the addition of Cecilia's being concealed in the caverns, where, she protested, she was likely to perish.

Rovenza, affecting the utmost concern for the situation of the young lady, immediately summoned his attendants, to descend with him and Lodelli into the caverns. Fortunately, the signora was provided with torches in the cottage, and Lodelli instantly gave two of these to the marchese's servants, and then led the way into the caverns, where, after a search of several hours, Cecilia was at length discovered insensible. In the very first moment of beholding her, Rovenza was struck with the singular resemblance she bore to the lovely and unfortunate Veronica di Udina, and he conceived an immediate suspicion, that this beautiful girl might, in reality, be the daughter of Udina, instead of the Countess di Mirandini. It was true, Ursulina had assured him, that the young Veronica had been accidentally killed by the assassin,

whom the former had married, but still he imagined there might be some mistake, and therefore determined to enquire most particularly into this affair, on his return to Venice. At all events, he was more interested than he was even conscious of, by the appearance of Cecilia; and the remembrance of Veronica seemed to plead in his heart for this lovely image of *her*, whom he had certainly loved, with a degree of adoration, of which his nature seemed wholly incapable.

The moment Cecilia was removed from the caverns to her chamber, the marchese sent for the Prior Ascollini, whose dismay at what had occurred at the cottage, was so excessive, that, in his first emotions, he accused the marchese of being the secret author of the whole transaction. The indignant hauteur with which Rovenza repelled this accusation, and his reference to Cecilia and her servant for the falsehood of this assertion, convinced the prior that he had judged erroneously, and he humbly apologized. The marchese significantly hinted to him to be careful not to repeat such an intimation, nor to acknowledge, in the presence of Cecilia, that he had ever, even for an instant, indulged such a suspicion. He then reverted to the lamentable situation of the lovely girl, and spoke of the danger likely to attend her remaining alone with her servant in the cottage. Ascollini eagerly replied, that, as it had been the intention of the signora,

that her daughter should, at the age of eighteen, enter a convent, such an asylum would now be the most eligible she could remove to. "Had been!" repeated the marchese, "and did the signora latterly alter this intention?" Ascollini confessed, that by the intimacy the signora had permitted to take place between Orazio and Cecilia, he had sufficient reason to apprehend that she had.—"And this is another proof of the signora's folly," sharply remarked the prior, "in suffering her credulity to be imposed upon, by some fine tale about this young bandit, who, I suppose, would never have visited the cottage, had he not taken a fancy to Cecilia." The acrimony and agitation with which the prior spoke, would have betrayed that he considered his lovely young pupil, with sentiments totally inconsistent with his sacred profession, and time of life, could the marchese have suspected this to be the case; but which, however, was literally true. Ascollini had not had fortitude to combat the influence of Cecilia's exquisite loveliness, and conscious that she could never be his, he rather wished her in her grave, than to behold her the wife of another. Hence all his rage against Orazio, whom he every moment more sincerely regretted he had not by some means betrayed into the hands of the marchese, who, he now doubted not, entertained a secret enmity against him.

The marchese, struck with the conduct of the signora, in permitting an unrestrained friendship between Orazio and her daughter, became even more assured that he was, indeed, the son of Costanza, and that this intimacy, implied an intention of uniting this lovely girl to the young Udina, if indeed she was not his sister; a circumstance which the marchese was most impatient fully to ascertain. In either case, however, it was right that she should be removed out of his way, and the marchese, after a few minutes' hesitation, resolved to take her to Venice, and place her under the protection of his lady. This determination he proposed to the prior, who, although most reluctant to assent to it, knew not what objection to offer; but when, on recollection, he felt, that with the Marchesa di Rovenza she would be secure from Orazio, he immediately expressed his acquiescence. The marchese then mentioned his design of immediately taking every possible means to discover the persons who had carried off the signora, and her faithful old domestic, artfully giving Ascollini such directions and advice for the purpose, as he knew would most mislead him on this point.

From Ascollini he had already learnt that Cecilia was as unacquainted as himself with the history of her mother, and therefore all the enquiries he made on this subject in his interview with her, were

merely artifice. But when the sorrowing girl informed him of her meeting with Angelo Guicciardini in the caverns, his consternation was unfeigned. Involuntarily he trembled at the name of this man, and the precipitation with which he hurried his departure from the cottage was the result of those apprehensions.

It was not till the following night at Milan that Fabricio joined the party. A private conference immediately took place there between the unworthy coadjutor and his lord. For the first time, the former displayed some symptoms of sullen dissatisfaction at his master's proceedings, and did not scruple to hint that he thought the introduction of Cecilia to the family at Venice would eventually be attended with disagreeable consequences. Rovenza, however, was not disposed to think thus, and replied, that as Orazio was beyond their present reach, he had thought it necessary to prevent all possibility of their meeting, by keeping her under his own eye. The marchese had already informed Fabricio of his suspicions relative to the union which he supposed had been projected between this lovely girl and the young Udina; but the discontented agent could scarcely admit the necessity of an act, that he did not believe calculated to produce any good effects, and which, he said, might induce so many evils. The marchese looked displeased, and intimated that he had already arranged his future plans to prevent any

danger occurring from his protection of Cecilia; but waved all further explanation till a more favourable opportunity. He then thought proper to attempt dissipating the vexation of Fabricio by a handsome sum of sequins, and some flattering promises: and thus a mutual good understanding was restored; which, however, was very nearly broken by Fabricio's alarm when he saw Lodelli, whose looks but too plainly proved that she had some recollection of him.

On informing his master of this circumstance, the latter certainly felt some uneasiness on the occasion; but this was not of long duration, as he thought some story might easily be formed, in order to make the young woman believe she had been mistaken; and this hint furnished Fabricio with the idea of saying, in the presence of Lodelli, that he had a brother much resembling himself, and who, he dreaded, had associated himself with a set of desperadoes.

The journey of Cecilia to Venice, and her introduction to the Rovenza family, have been before detailed; but it is necessary here to mention, that, previous to her introduction to the presence of the marchesa, the marchese had a private interview with his lady, in which he informed her of the Count de Weilburgh's having discovered the retreat of the countess, and of his having used the privilege of a husband's authority to remove her from thence.

He then proceeded to acquaint her that the young lady, whom he meant to introduce to her notice and protection, was the daughter of the countess. Rovenza neither acknowledged nor disclaimed any share in these proceedings of De Weilburgh; and the marchesa was too much agitated to make any observations on the subject. Rovenza then continued to acquaint her that Cecilia was entirely ignorant of her real name and rank, and he advised his lady not to reveal to her, at least for a time, what her mother had thought proper to conceal; adding, "For similar reasons you will do well also to forbear confessing any knowledge of the Count de Weilburgh, whom I would by no means have mentioned as my friend; for as this timid girl has unaccountably been taught to believe that she was the principal object of his visit to the cottage of her mother, she may be excessively alarmed at finding herself in the power of one so well acquainted with him whom she imagines to be her greatest foe. In observing these prudent and humane precautions to ensure her some slight degree of tranquillity, no difficulty can occur, as the count's change of name and title will prevent her hearing him distinguished by the only appellation by which she has heard him mentioned."

To these injunctions the marchesa listened in silence. Too deeply affected by the knowledge of De Weilburgh's successful plan against the countess, she durst not

trust herself to reply on the subject, lest she should betray the excessive uneasiness she suffered, and she could offer no objection to following an advice, the observance of which was certainly so well calculated to avoid increasing the distress of the poor Cecilia.

De Weilburgh, as the marchese asserted, had several years back exchanged the family name for that of Ostenfeldt, in compliance with the wishes of an illustrious relation, who had bequeathed him an immense property on that condition. This circumstance the marchesa had made known to the Countess di Mirandini, who, accustomed, however, to call him De Weilburgh, never mentioned him by his new title. At length the marchesa gave a ready acquiescence to the wishes of her lord; for, in fact, she really considered this plan as equally well calculated to conceal her own long and secret friendship with the Countess di Mirandini, as to spare Cecilia the pain of hearing a relation full of events, the knowledge of which must render her doubly miserable. She ventured, however, to enquire what motive had induced the marchese to bring her to the pallazo.

"My motives are those of humanity, and the interest which this amiable girl inspires," replied Rovenza, in a tone which peremptorily forbade all further questions on the subject; and the marchesa, reflecting that the young Cecilia would at least

be secure from present danger under her own protection, was silent.

The moment she beheld the lovely girl, she imbibed for her sentiments most tenderly maternal; and, indeed, the sweetness of Cecilia's looks, the graceful elegance and modesty of her air, combined with that artless ingenuousness so conspicuous in her manners and language, weere truly calculated to inspire the most favorable opinion of her. But the style in which she was received by the whole of the Rovenza family is already known. Uninformed of who she really was, and ignorant of every particular of her story, except that the marchese had accidentally found her in the cottage from which the signora her mother had been so mysteriously forced away, Leonardo and Ottavania considered her almost as a dependent on the protecting notice of their parents; but the former was so much fascinated by her uncommon loveliness, and the elegant propriety of her deportment, that she soon inspired him with a degree of respect equal to his passion; and that this passion was sincere, was soon evinced in the revolution which the influence of her charms produced in a few days in his sentiments and conduct.

It may be remembered that as soon as the marchesa had an opportunity of conversing privately with Cecilia, that lady made her recapitulate the little history of her early days to the period of her arrival at the pallazo, and that she heard with the

deepest emotion, the description this lovely girl gave of Orazio di Udina, whose perfections she soon discerned had made an indelible impression upon the heart of her young *protegée.* Her joy at finding that the youth had quitted the priory, previous to the arrival of the marchese in the neighbourhood, was almost beyond concealment, though she by no means suspected that the marchese had had any other view in visiting the Lago Maggiore, than that of accelerating the designs of De Weilburgh on the Countess di Mirandini. Every moment that the marchesa conversed with Cecilia, increased her affection for this amiable girl, and as the sensibility of the latter expanded to her observation, she became doubly cautious of committing any inadvertence which might betray to her that she was unacquainted with past circumstances relative to her mother; an explanation of which would have been so painful for the marchesa to give, and for her young *protegée* to receive. It is unnecessary to repeat here how much Cecilia was affected by the kindness of the marchesa; a kindness of which she was so much the more sensible, as it formed such a contrast to the manners of the rest of her family.

The Marchese di Rovenza in withdrawing with his daughter from the pallazo, on a visit to a friend, was not merely actuated by a view to her gratification, but he had often, at the villa of that friend, heard

Angelo Guicciardini spoken of in a manner which evinced a particular satisfaction in collecting and recording accounts of the exploits of that extraordinary bandit. To gain every possible intelligence respecting the robber Angelo, had now become too deep an interest with Rovenza, for him to delay any opportunity of acquiring some further knowledge of his character and actions, and therefore he lost not a moment in accompanying Ottavania on this visit.

The marchese, as he expected, received very elaborate details of all that had ever reached the ears of his friend relative to Angelo; and his penetration soon enabled him to comprehend that this formidable bandit possessed, or at least affected to possess, a love of justice, which seemed to render it highly probable that he was privately the chief supporter of Orazio; yet by what means he could hope, or expect, to attempt any thing in favour of this young man in Venice, was a point on which Rovenza could not form any fixed opinion. There was but one person existing who was fully acquainted with the horrible transactions by which he had procured the ruin and deaths of the Udina family, and that one was Biondello di Balvo, who, he well knew, was too well secured to give his evidence: for, in fact, he had been a prisoner for years in the dungeons of the castle of Torcello.

It may be asked, why such a man as the Marchese di Rovenza would permit a being so well acquainted with his guilt to live, when he could have as easily detroyed as have confined him; but there is often a providential fatality, which irressistibly impels the guilty to become the instruments of their own punishment: and although the marchese, from year to year, wished for the death of Biondello, he never had sufficient resolution to decide on shortening the life of one, whom he considered as secured from from all possibility of injuring him. And indeed the manner in which Biondello was confined seemed to justify the supposition. Rovenza, however, would not have spared his life, even for a moment, after the commission of the crimes, to execute which he had employed him in the Udina affair, had not the more urgent necessity of dispatching Velasquez, his accomplice, compelled the marchese to depend upon him for the accomplishment of this deed also. When Biondello had asked Rovenza's permission to employ an agent, whose person should be perfectly unknown to the Signor Geronimo Ollivetto, or any of the inhabitants of the Udina pallazo, the former had consented only on condition that Biondello should, immediately after the commission of those deeds of horror, contrive to silence so alarming a witness, and Biondello had readily consented. Accordingly, immediately after the murder of Geronimo, Bi-

ondello, and his companion, fled with all possible speed towards the Cadorino, and the former took an opportunity when in a lone and unfrequented road, of stabbing the latter; and, believing him dead, pursued his way towards the castle of Torcello, where the marchese had promised he should find a safe retreat till the bustle of pursuit was over:—a retreat, however, which the artful Rovenza was resolved should last for life, and he ensnared his victim in the following manner. On the death of the Signora di Aretino, the few servants she had kept in the castle were all dismissed, save one man, whose infirmities, more than his years, rendered him unable to perform any active service, and as he was considered as a faithful domestic, he was appointed to reside in the castle, as a sort of steward. This man, who was of a gloomy and malevolent temper, but who was attached from habit to the signora, had imbibed all her vindictive resentment against her brother, the Count di Udina, and had been the chief means of inspiring the young Aretino with those early sentiments of acrimonious hatred against the count, which eventually led Arnolfo to the commission of so many crimes. With this ill-disposed Morso, so he was called, the unfortunate boy had been accustomed frequently to explore every part of the castle, and, in the course of these ramblings, had several times visited the subterraneans, in which were dungeons so fearfully con-

trived, that whosoever once entered any one of them, could never again come forth, without demolishing the massy gratings at the entrances, which, closing on the prisoners with a secret spring, could never be re-opened.

Often, as listening to the terrific traditional tales related by Morso respecting these dungeons, had the young Arnolfo wished that the Count di Udina was for ever entombed in one of them; and as often had Morso reiterated the wish. After the death of the Signora di Aretino, and when Arnolfo was on the eve of setting off for the pallazo of this hated Count di Udina at Venice, he had a long parting conference with his favourite Morso, from whom, as the only being that had ever shewn him any attention, he really regretted separating; and this man, to quiet the apparent uneasiness of his young master, told him, that if ever any one offended or injured him, he had only to send him to the castle, and he, Morso, would take care they should never have an opportunity of doing so again, if the dungeons would still confine offenders as securely as they had formerly done. The young Aretino, with all the growing malevolence of his heart, expressed the most unfeigned satisfaction at receiving a promise so consonant to his wishes; and, as if intuitively assured that he should yet have occasion to put Morso's fidelity to the proof, told him, that he would one day or other send him a bird for

one of his iron cages. "Send but a token of your will also," replied Morso, "and I will not fail to fulfil it."

From the very first moment that Aretino employed Biondello, he meditated securing this man in this manner, and when he sent him off to find the promised asylum in the castle of Torcello, he gave him a ring, and a small billet, containing merely the words "when Morso sees this token he will know how to act." Accordingly, when Biondello arrived at the castle, Morso contrived to decoy him into the dungeons, where he remained to pine out years of misery. The Marchese di Rovenza, however, made a short visit to the castle, during the tour which he took for his health after the death of Veronica di Udina, and had an interview with Biondello. This was in consequence of his wish of positively ascertaining whether the latter had actually assassinated the accomplice in his crimes. The wretched Biondello swore that he had, and importuned for his own liberty, with a thousand oaths of fidelity and silence, at which Rovenza laughed, and left him to his fate; taking care, however, to render Morso's life so comfortable, that he should have no cause for complaint or neglect.

Thus feeling himself secure from the danger of Biondello's evidence, he could not entirely believe that he had much to fear from Orazio di Udina, or the friends who might privately favour him. Still,

however, he could not wholly conquer the involuntary uneasiness he suffered on the occasion, and most truly regretted that he could not devise how to dispatch in secret the immediate cause of his dread and vexation.

The events which occurred on the night after his return to the pallazo were not of a nature to alleviate the perturbation of his guilty mind. No sooner did he hear the Major-domo Caltonino's account of the supposed tall phantom that he had seen in the grand corridor, than he conjectured that the stranger must be some mysterious visitant to Cecilia, and, with all the tenacity of fear, his suspicion glanced on Angelo Guicciardini.

In the first moments of his anxiety and incertitude on this subject, he was almost inclined to adopt the opinion of Fabricio, namely, that his having introduced Cecilia to the protection of his family would eventually prove unfortunate. It was now, however, too late to regret this circumstance, and the only alternative which remained was to endeavour to render it advantageous to his plans. He had already observed, that in the character of Cecilia was combined good sense, sweetness of temper, a better informed mind than her country-women in general possessed, fixed principles of virtue and religion, and an ingenuousness which could be equalled only by her perfect ignorance of that knowledge of the world which enables us

practically to detect and avoid the snares of the designing; yet, mingled with all these excellent qualities, some traits of reserve and timid suspicion were fully discernible. How far these latter propensities were the effects of nature, education, or present precaution, the marchese was now resolved to ascertain as speedily as he could; and, influenced by the idea that she was better acquainted with her mother's history than she confessed herself to be, he endeavoured to discover how far she was really informed on this subject, by affecting the most perfect ignorance on these points himself.

Hence, in the interview in which he so anxiously questioned her as to the stranger seen in the corridor, his earnest enquiries respecting her mother, Orazio, and the caverns of the cottage.

In this interview, it was impossible for a man so deeply versed in human character as the marchese, not to perceive, without difficulty, that Cecilia had her reserves; and he immediately determined to leave no artifice untried that could effect his purpose of penetrating into the extent of the information she had acquired of the story of her mother and the Udinas. The mystery and hesitation which her manner towards him evinced, served, however, to renew his surmises as to the possibility of her being the young Veronica di Udina, and he immediately proceeded to the place where Ursulina was lodged, with the intention of

minutely questioning the old woman on this subject. The result of these enquiries sufficiently prove how possible it is for low cunning sometimes to outwit the utmost refinement of art. Rovenza did not think it essential entirely to disguise how much his mind was interested in the enquiries he then made relative to the death of the child stabbed by the ruffian in the cottage of the Countess di Mirandini, nor his anxiety to ascertain clearly whether the young Veronica was really the victim; and as the crafty Ursulina marked the variations of emotion in his looks and in the tone of his voice, she fancied that she might derive some advantage by affirming what she believed to be the marchese's wish, namely, that Cecilia was, in fact, Veronica di Udina. Affecting, therefore, much confusion and uneasiness at having, as she said, previously deceived him, she confessed that the child of the countess had unfortunately been her husband's victim; but that that lady, having taken a whim to conceal that it was her own child that had perished, and to adopt the young Veronica, had made her solemnly swear never to reveal the secret. "I have been very wicked and unfortunate, it is true, your excellenza," sobbed out this artful being; "but I was always so faithful to my dear lady, that I never before mentioned a word of this, no, not even to my confessor."

In short, the agitated marchese was ef-

fectually imposed upon, and, from this moment, fully believed that Cecilia was indeed the daughter of that lovely Veronica who had been the object of his wildest adoration. Impelled by that strange contrariety of feeling and prejudice to which humanity is too subject, Rovenza now became inclined to regard the young Cecilia with a degree of anxiety and partiality which could be equalled only by the dread and dislike with which the name of Orazio inspired him; and while he earnestly desired to save and succour the supposed Veronica, he as earnestly designed the death of him whom he believed to be her brother. Before, however, he would yield up himself entirely to this involuntary prepossesion in her favour, he considered that all his wish of serving her must depend on how far she was acquainted with his own character. At all events, he was determined never to give her up to the Count de Weilburgh, who would doubtless claim her as the daughter of the Countess di Mirandini; yet how to avoid so doing, without involving himself in difficulty and danger, he could not perceive. A few days released him from all apprehension on this subject, by his receiving certain information of the death of De Weilburgh. That the party, who had released the countess from De Weilburgh, and deprived him of life, belonged to Angelo Guicciardini was instantly conjectured by Rovenza, and he was now thrown into the

utmost perplexity and alarm by his ignorance and incertitude respecting the designs of that extraordinary man. If, as he feared, Angelo Guicciardini had any plan in view for attempting the recovery of Orazio's birthrights, it could only be done by a vindication of Costanza's innocence; and such an intention must imply some knowledge of his own treachery. How Guicciardini could have obtained such a knowledge, Rovenza certainly could not conjecture; but, at all events, it appeared highly prudent to guard against the danger which must threaten himself and his family, in case his surmises were just. Before he could satisfactorily decide in what manner to proceed on this occasion, the removal to the Villa di Rovenza took place.

Here, however, he found himself more at liberty to arrange his plans than he could have been in Venice; and an incident that occurred a few days after the arrival of the family at the villa, furnished him with the idea of a project which promised to save his children at least from the ruin which he feared impended over his own head.

It has been related that the apartments assigned to the use of Cecilia were those occupied by the unfortunate Veronica di Udina during the period of her insanity, and were the scene of her death; and that there was one magnificent room beyond the oratory which the marchese never permitted to be used by the family or visitors.

In this room, however, the marchese had been accustomed to seclude himself for hours together, at those periods which he usually passed at the villa every summer. Insensible to every feeling of remorse for the criminal actions of his life, he attributed not to himself the fate of that lovely victim, but with all the blind sophistry of that specious self-delusion with which guilt frequently veils its own unrepented deeds, imputed all her misfortunes and her death solely to the love she had borne Costanza di Udina, and while he still execrated the memory of his cousin, he mourned the loss of Veronica with all the cherished tenacity, which the disappointment of the strongest impulse that had ever affected his heart, was capable of producing on such a mind as his own. Although never used from the time of Veronica's death till the period when they were occupied by Cecilia, for whose reception they had been prepared by the express command of the marchese, they yet had been kept in the most perfect order, more especially the room so often frequented by the marchese.

It was not till the evening preceding that of the fête given by his lady, that he paid his accustomed visit to this room, where he intended to pass those hours which he so strangely held sacred to the memory of her whose loss he still so much lamented. For the first time, however, Rovenza now found his mind too much oc-

cupied by the perplexing circumstances in which he was involved, to indulge in the meditations which usually engaged his thoughts in these extraordinary hours of self-inflicted mourning; and he soon found himself more inclined to yield to those reflections which his immediate concerns suggested. Fully assured that Cecilia was the daughter of Veronica, he could not divest himself of the idea that she was far better acquainted with her own history than she confessed herself to be, and imagining that she might have brought with her to Venice such papers or valuables belonging to the Countess di Mirandini, the sight of which might enable him more clearly to ascertain the fact, it now suddenly occurred to him to enter her chamber, and there make such researches as would probably put him in possession of the means of removing all further doubts on the subject. No sooner had he conceived this design than he resolved to put it in practice, especially as he knew that Cecilia was then engaged with the marchesa. Cautiously entering her apartment through the oratory, he found, as he expected, that the young lady and her attendant were absent. Slight was his research ere he had cause to congratulate himself on the step he had taken; for he soon discovered the casket of jewels presented by the Count Ferbonino to Cecilia, and instantly recognized them as having belonged to Veronica di Udina. To find these jewels in the possession of Ce-

cilia, appeared to him to be an undeniable proof that she was indeed the daughter of that lovely unfortunate, and after some reflection on the subject, he resolved to secure the casket, as a future evidence of what he imagined to be true, and therefore scrupled not to take it from the cabinet in which it was placed, and to suffer Cecilia to believe that it had either been lost or stolen. The unequivocal conviction which this incident afforded him that Cecilia was in fact the child of Udina, caused him no longer to hesitate in adopting the half-formed plan which seemed to present him the hope of securing his children from partaking the ruin, in which, a probable discovery of his treachery to his cousin, might involve himself, and this plan was to unite the supposed Veronica to his son Leonardo, and could he discover Orazio, and persuade him to accept his assistance and protection, to endeavour to effect a marriage between him and Ottavania. By this scheme he should not only secure the immense property of Udina in his family, but should also render it the interest of the young Udina to use every possible means of preserving a family to which he was so closely allied from ruin and disgrace.

The appearance of Angelo Guicciardini on the following night in the gardens of the villa, while it afforded him an admirable opportunity of concealing from Cecilia who had been the purloiner of the casket of jewels, threw him into new

astonishment and dismay, and convinced him, beyond all possibility of doubt, that the robber took the most active interest in the fortunes of Orazio and the lovely girl then under his own protection. But when, in the interview which followed with Cecilia herself, he received from her a full account of the incidents which she had hitherto concealed from his knowledge, his uneasiness and vexation were increased beyond description, and he determined to lose no time in executing his designs. The difficulty of getting a letter conveyed to Angelo still thwarted his intentions; and besides, he was under the necessity of publicly avowing himself as the enemy of the man who had so audaciously entered his gardens on a festive night. He had already persuaded his lady and Cecilia that he had been instrumental in the measures pursued by the Venetian senate for the apprehension of Angelo; but this was not true, those measures being really commenced at the instigation of a noble Venetian, who, for an act of cruelty and injustice to an inferior had lately been compelled by the robber to make a most ample restitution to the object of his oppression. This, however, was not generally known: the Venetian's fear of further chastisement, inducing him to be as private in his proceedings as he could possibly be.

Whilst the guilty, wretched Rovenza was thus involved in the most tormenting cares and inquietudes on the subject of

averting the evils he so justly dreaded, he was also suffering under the mental affliction which added tenfold horrors to his situation, and partly incapacitated him from taking the proper means for his own security and the safety of his children. From the first moment in which he had beheld Cecilia, he had been deeply affected by tho resemblance which she bore to the unfortunate Veronica di Udina, but it was not till the night when he heard her sing the sweetly plaintive air which had been the favorite solace of poor Veronica's hours of insanity, that his senses became disturbed; but from that period he occasionally discovered symptoms of an alarming return of his derangement. The events that successively followed were not likely to decrease these symptoms, and on his arrival at the Villa di Rovenza his temporary fits of delirium attacked him whenever any circumstance happened that reminded him too forcibly of past events. An incident occurred, however, on the day after Cecilia's confession to him, which, while it confirmed to him that Orazio was privately noticed and supported by a few powerful and illustrious friends, seemed to present to him some prospect of accomplishing his views.

In brief, he received a letter from the Prior Ascollini, informing him, that the person who had visited Orazio at the priory, and had appeared at the cottage of the Signora di Berlotti as a pilgrim, was indeed, as she had

said, a nobleman, and that his title was the Count Ferbonino, Ascollini further added, that he had gained some slight intimation that Orazio had, under the patronage of this nobleman, entered the Venetian army, though to what regiment he belonged he could not ascertain. This information was truly acceptable to Rovenza, as it furnished him with some clue which might at least enable him to discover in what manner the Count Ferbonino intended to serve and establish the fortunes of his young *protegée*. After a very serious consideration of the subject, he determined to write immediately to the count, and, informing him that he was acquainted with Orazio's existence and situation, claim the privilege which his relationship gave him of interesting himself in his nephew's behalf, hinting, at the same time, that nothing could give him greater happiness than immediately to unite his daughter with the young Orazio.

This letter was accordingly written and sent off by a special courier, who had positive orders to seek the Count Ferbonino with all possible dispatch.

It may be remembered, that it was about this period Orazio first made his appearance at the Villa di Luzzana, and that on the night when Ottavania di Rovenza conversed so freely with her subservient friends the Bellinzettos beneath the windows of Cecilia's apartment, the latter was

much alarmed by the appearance of the ghastly spectral figure which she beheld in the oratory adjoining her chamber.

That the mystery attached to this figure was well known to the marchesa and the Signora della Albina, may already have been conjectured by the reader, from the conversation which followed on that subject between the latter lady and Cecilia, and from the extreme agitation of the marchesa when she learned how much her young *protegée* had been terrified on that occasion after her meeting with Orazio at the Villa di Luzzana.

The interest excited in the minds of both the marchese and Cecilia respecting Orazio, and the fate of Angelo Guicciardini, who was now suspected to be in Venice, and closely beset by the spies of the inquisition and the sbirri, soon superseeded all the other concerns which claimed their attention; the marchesa considering him as a singular character more mistaken and unfortunate than crimnial, and as one of the early friends of the young Orazio; and Cecilia now deeply regretting that she had exposed him, who, most probably was much more inclined to serve than to injure her mother, to all the horrors of an ignominious, though in some degree merited death. The perplexity and unhappiness of Cecilia was, however, scarcely greater than that of the marchese. Compelled by circumstances to use so much reserve and evasion towards the amiable girl, she suffered all

the embarrassment and distress which the necessity for caution and mystery almost ever produces on a generous and candid mind; but it was not till after the marchese's departure to Venice with the Count Carraci, that she became truly miserable. Internally convinced that Orazio had proceeded from the villa di Luzzana to Venice, in consequence of his wish of discovering something relative to the situation of the Signora di Berlotti, the marchesa dreaded that the youth would either be involved in the dreadful termination of Angelo's fate, or, by some accident, become known to the marchese, who, in all probability, would treat him as an impostor, and hasten the fatal catastrophe which threatened the lives of both Angelo and himself. Cecilia's alarm and grief were equally excessive. The arrival of Ascollini, the day after the marchese's setting off for Venice, was a new source of anxiety to the marchesa.

Rovenza, in one of his recent mental wanderings, had betrayed in her presence his knowledge of, and correspondence with the prior, and in such connected terms, as had informed her, in part, that Ascollini had given him some information respecting both the Countess di Mirandini and Orazio; though to what extent the marchesa could not discover. This circumstance was sufficient to assure her that her lord was now acquainted with some particulars of the secret of Orazio, and while she was

thus enabled to form a fixed judgment of the character of Ascollini, she trembled at the idea of Orazio's being discovered, and exposed to the danger which awaited him, from his being in Venice prior to his appeal for the revocation of the sentence which had condemned the children of Udina to perpetual banishment. The marchese, however, had proceeded to Venice only in consequence of his being privately summoned thither by one of the principal senators, who was desirous of hearing from himself whether the report of Angelo having daringly entered the gardens of his villa on the night of the fete was founded in truth. Questioned minutely on this point, Rovenza was compelled to confess that he had some reason to suppose that the intruder was indeed Angelo Guicciardini; but as he avoided preferring any complaint against the robber, the enquiries were not continued.

On the day following, he would have returned to the villa, had he not been prevented by the arrival of the Father Ascollini in Venice. The moment the prior entered his presence, he informed him, that he had made a journey from the Milanese purposely to acquaint him, that he had discovered that Orazio held a command in a Venetian regiment which he mentioned, and was known only by the name of Locendro. To the marchese this information was equally surprising and acceptable. He had already heard both

Leonardo and Ottavania lavish in the praises of the Signor Locendro, and now it was at length in his power to obtain a personal interview. But when Ascollini further informed him, that not a few minutes back he had seen Orazio in Venice, and urged him to apprehend the youth as an associate of the robber Angelo, the marchese was thrown into the utmost confusion by a proposal so inimical to his present plans, and could only dismiss the subject by a seeming acquiescence. Availing himself of this acquiescence, and supposing that he was rendering Rovenza an important service, for which he should be amply recompensed, the prior flew to give immediate information respecting Orazio to the sbirri, and accidentally arrived at the very moment when the party of officers were on the point of proceeding to the house where they expected to find and arrest Angelo Guicciardini. Ascollini was then compelled to accompany them, in order to identify the person whom he had just denounced. Angelo, with several of his most faithful followers, was indeed in the house; and one of these was the young man whom the Signora di Berlotti had observed so much resembled Orazio in figure, and who now, in the scuffle that ensued, was severely wounded.

This circumstance was observed by the prior, who, half blinded by his fears and perturbation, really believed that it was Orazio that had been slain. With the ac-

count of the unsuccessful attempt to take Guicciardini, and the supposed death of Orazio, the father soon returned to the marchese, who was still at his pallazo. The intelligence brought him by Ascollini certainly appeared to him very extraordinary; but he as certainly felt the utmost satisfaction at the idea of being thus released from all apprehensions on Orazio's account; for he did not doubt that the prior was correct in his information of the death of the youth, whose person he could not possibly be supposed to mistake. On the next day the marchese and his party set out on their return to the Villa di Rovenza, and on the way Ascollini privately expatiated to Rovenza on the good effects which would result from informing Cecilia that Orazio had perished. This the marchese accordingly did on his return, and occasioned that dreadful shock to the marchesa which so much agitated her, that, losing all precaution, she betrayed in an instant her knowledge that this Orazio was her nephew, by exclaiming, "You have killed the son of Udina!" The swoon into which Rovenza then immediately fell was produced by the astonishment and terror he felt at thus suddenly discovering that she was acquainted with a circumstance which he had never once suspected was known to her.

On being conveyed to his chamber, he was attacked by one of the temporary fits of the dreadful malady to which he was

subject, and, during the delirium, raved incessantly of Orazio, whom he so frequently mentioned by the name of Locendro, that his son, who was at this time his most constant attendant, availed himself of the first interval of reason that he had, to ask whether his father wished to see the Signor Locendro, as he so frequently mentioned his name. "Is he not dead?" hollowly groaned the miserable Rovenza. Leonardo, who from this expression would have supposed that the delirium of the marchese was returning, had not the anxiety, intelligently marked in his eyes, evinced the contrary, replied, that he had himself seen and spoken to the Signor Locendro not half an hour before they left Venice, and had seen him embark for the Terra Firma, to join his regiment at Vicenza. A few more enquiries convinced the marchese that Ascollini had either deceived him by a false account of the death of Orazio, or had really been mistaken. A moment's reflection assured him that as the prior could have no interest in deceiving him, the latter must have been the case; and he no longer doubted that Orazio still lived. Dismissing his son from his chamber, under the pretence of being inclined to repose, Rovenza endeavoured to collect his thoughts, in order to reflect further how he should proceed in the business; but he continued too ill all that day to be capable of deciding properly on the subject On the next, however, he was so

far recovered as to be able to commence his plan, by an immediate interview with the Father Ascolini, whom he then informed that he had made such discoveries respecting both Orazio and Cecilia as would determine him to serve and protect both to the utmost of his power; not omitting to hint that they both would, perhaps, be more closely allied to his family.

With these evasive explanations, which, however, were sufficient to intimidate the father from too freely expressing his erroneous opinion of Orazio, Ascollini departed from the villa.

Rovenza, now perfectly aware that his lady was better informed respecting Orazio than he himself was, saw that his most prudent course would be to induce her to reveal to him every particular with which she was acquainted respecting the youth; and the moment he could leave the room, he confessed to her that having providentially discovered that his nephew still lived, and was privately patronised by some noble friends, the principal of whom, he had also learnt, was the Count Ferbonino, he had resolved that a relation who ought to be so dear to him should no longer be dependent upon strangers for that support and protection which he himself was best entitled to offer him; and that he had, in consequence, already written to the count on the subject, proposing, that if the sentence of banishment could be revoked, to give his

daughter, with a princely portion, to Orazio. In short, the marchese soon persuaded his lady that his intentions towards his nephew were, in fact, equally honourable, feeling, and just, and in one hour overthrew all her former suspicions respecting his treachery to Costanza di Udina. Mutual explanations then took place: the marchesa ingenuously confessed her long correspondence with the Countess di Mirandini; and the marchese, in return, informed her that he had discovered that Cecilia was not the daughter of that lady, but the child of her sister Veronica. Astonished and perplexed as was the marchesa by this intelligence, she had as yet nothing to oppose to its truth or falsehood, and therefore suspended her opinion till the Countess di Mirandini could be brought forward to confirm or deny the assertions of Ursulina. It was determined, however, that Cecilia herself should not be informed of this circumstance, but be suffered for some time longer to continue in total ignorance of every particular which had hitherto been withheld from her knowledge, as no proper explanations could be entered into till the Countess di Mirandini could be found. The marchesa, now apprized of her lord's wish of uniting Cecilia to her son, and fully aware of all the advantages that must result to Leonardo from an union with so amiable and lovely a girl, and equally sensible of the danger of giving the least encouragement to the sentiments

of the latter for Orazio; who might really prove to be her brother, soon assented to the plans of the marchese.

Letters were then immediately dispatched to Orazio, claiming him as a relative whom they were anxiously impatient to receive, and inviting him to the villa. His arrival and reception there have already been described.

Dreadful were the secret emotions with which the marchese first beheld the son of the injured Costanza di Udina. The art and duplicity of his nature could scarcely suffice to conceal, in some measure, the workings of his guilty mind, as he turned his eyes on the youth who was so perfect a resemblance of his unhappy father. It was necessary, however, to use every endeavour to combat feelings so inimical to the accomplishment of the designs he had in view; and at length he succeeded in acquiring sufficient calmness and presence of mind to devote his whole thoughts to discovering on what grounds Orazio and his friends intended applying to the senate of Venice for the vindication of the Count di Udina, and the revocation of the sentence of banishment. If Rovenza's secret amazement was extreme, on learning that Velasquez Maretti, the accomplice of Biondello, had been suffered to escape by the latter, and had eventually been the instrument of bringing to light the innocence of Udina, in his confession to Angelo Guicciardini, it was even exceeded by the joy he felt at the

discovery that he himself was not in the least suspected as the original author of the whole dreadful transaction. The Count Ferbonino's search after Biondello he internally smiled at, as he knew it must prove unavailing; yet, in order to destroy the least probability of detection, he resolved to end the life of the wretched prisoner, as soon as he could send Morso an intimation to that effect.

Released, by the explanation of Orazio respecting the intentions of his friends, from all apprehension of being personally implicated in the Udina affair, the marchese found himself at liberty to pursue uninterruptedly those plans that best promised to secure the continued possession of the Udina estates in his own family, and to give new lustre to his name, as the generous friend of the orphans whose property he enjoyed. It has been before remarked, that the vices of Rovenza were rather the effects of the dreadful and malevolent prejudices early instilled into his infant mind, and a neglected education, than of nature; and this was in some degree evinced by his conduct and intention towards Orazio and Cecilia. It is true, he would have sacrificed both to his own security, when he imagined there existed a necessity for so doing; but it is equally true, that he regarded neither, Cecilia especially, with those feelings of dislike and malice which had influenced him to accomplish the destruction of Costanza di Udina. Deter-

mined now to aid the intended appeal of Orazio to the council, and almost assured of success, from the great interest which would be exerted on the occasion, Rovenza did not doubt but that the confession of Velasquez Maretti would prove of sufficient force to clear the memory of Costanza from the foul stains of treason and murder. All that now remained for him to do was to act with caution in his proceedings, and to endeavour to discover where the Countess di Mirandini was placed. That she was concealed somewhere by Angelo Guicciardini, he very justly believed; but wherefore the latter should hint to Orazio that she was still in the power of her enemy De Weilburgh, was wholly unaccountable. At all events, he reflected, that the safest method would be to befriend the orphans. Ottavania's passion for Orazio was already sufficiently discernible to the marchese to assure him that she would present no obstacle to his views; and of the impression which Cecilia had made upon the heart of his son he could not possibly entertain the slightest doubt. To the evident attachment of Leonardo, however, he had not as yet ventured to give any positive encouragement; dreading lest the impetuosity of the young man should urge him to an eclaircissement too precipitate. Neither would Rovenza yet entrust to his children the knowledge of Orazio's birth, or his full intentions respecting him and Cecilia. The principal obstacle that now

seemed to threaten to oppose his designs, was the mutual affection which he soon perceived to subsist between Orazio and Cecilia—an affection which he believed must have been encouraged by the Countess di Mirandini, and which encouragement certainly appeared to imply that they were not related to each other. As the marchese reflected on this circumstance, he began to entertain some just doubts of Ursulina's veracity, and was extremely inclined to believe that Cecilia was really the daughter of the Countess di Mirandini. Impressed with this idea, and excessively enraged by the surmise that he had been imposed upon, he was upon the point of setting out for Venice, to compel the old woman to a positive declaration of the truth, when he received intelligence that Morso was dead. The person who brought this information was a peasant of the domain of the Castle of Torcello, and one who had frequently passed several days with the old steward.

This sudden news threw the marchese into much uneasiness respecting the fate of Biondello, for whose death he had as yet had no opportunity of sending instructions to Morso; but as the dungeon in which he was confined was impenetrable, there was every reason to suppose that the wretched prisoner must have expired in all the horrors of famine, when his keeper was no longer able to bring him his daily food. This reflection soon calmed Rovenza's fears

on this head; and he was now well satisfied that accident had deprived him of the necessity of commanding the death of this man.

As soon as he had dismissed the peasant, he set off for Venice; and, when arrived there, he immediately proceeded to the house where Ursulina was still confined. His minute enquiries, intimidating threats, and promises of reward, at length drew from the affrighted old woman a confession of the deception she had practised; and Rovenza, after the most penetrating investigation, could no longer doubt that Cecilia was the daughter of the Countess di Mirandini. This conviction now altered all his plans. In one moment he perceived the necessity of removing this beauteous girl out of the way of Orazio di Udina, and accordingly began to consider in what manner he could best accomplish this. To endeavour to annihilate the hopes which the lovers might entertain of being united, and immediately remove Cecilia, was the instant suggestion of his prolific mind: hence his hints as to the probability of Cecilia's being the daughter of Angelo Guicciardini—an intimation which Orazio's and Cecilia's ignorance of the Countess di Mirandini's story rendered but too impressive, especially as certain circumstances combined to give it the appearance of truth, which overwhelmed the young Udina with the utmost distress, and

plunged the poor Cecilia into the deepest anguish and horror.

It was not without the utmost grief and reluctance that the marchesa and the Signora della Albina agreed not to give any positive contradiction to this cruel supposition; but as both ladies could not avoid approving the intended unions projected by the marchese, and could not disavow the possibility of Cecilia and Orazio being related by the closest tie (for Rovenza yet artfully concealed from them the recent confession of Ursulina), they compelled themselves to a tacit permission of a deception from which they imagined much good and no particular injury would result: yet, had not the marchesa been at this time deeply distressed by the situation of Leonardo, it is probable she would not so easily have acquiesced in a scheme so repugnant to her feelings and principles. Under such circumstances the marchesa was really pleased with Cecilia's importunities to be permitted to retire into a convent for a time; and the marchese appeared to approve her removal, till his son should be recovered from the effects of Faenza's treacherous attack. It is true, the marchesa had frequently entreated the marchese to acquaint both Orazio and Cecilia with their supposed consanguinity, as the best means of breaking off the attachment which evidently subsisted between them; but he ever positively refused to do so,

alleging, as his plea for silence and reserve on the subject, the probability that the young man would, in such a case, claim the right of being the chief protector and guide of his sister—a claim which would probably frustrate all his plans for allying them with his own children. The marchesa, fearful that any opposition of this nature might induce her lord to withdraw his friendship and support from the supposed orphans, was at length prevailed upon to acquiesce in all his projects.

Although the marchese had apparently consented to Cecilia's being removed to a convent, nothing could in reality be further from his intention than to suffer her to be removed from his own power into the society of strangers. He had already determined to send her to the Castle of Torcello.

In this scheme he had a deeper project in view than merely to send her out of the way of Orazio. Cecilia di Mirandini, the heiress of large possessions, and of an illustrious family, was equally as proper a bride for Leonardo di Rovenza as any other female possessed of rank and wealth; and the marchese was determined she should be his. In the management of this affair, however, he acted with his usual art and caution.

Privately revealing to his son that Cecilia was of noble birth, he demanded from him a confession of the sentiments with

which she had inspired him. Leonardo of course acknowledged that he adored her.

"Then," replied the subtle father, "I must yield a little to existing circumstances to ensure your happiness. I must declare to you that I am as anxious for your union with this lovely girl as yourself; yet there are obstacles, which I cannot now explain, which, I fear, will prove inimical to your wishes. You have a dangerous rival in Orazio." Leonardo was now half frantic, and it was some time ere the marchese could find an opportunity of adding,—"but had Cecilia ever evinced the slightest partiality towards you,—a—a well managed elopement might have effected every thing we wish, and spared a considerable deal of anxiety and trouble. But the difficulties attending such a stratagem, and the state you are in, render it almost impracticable. Though, in fact, to remove her to a convenient situation, some time previous to your being able to travel, would prevent suspicion, and give greater security to the scheme: and——"

This hint was sufficient to the impetuous Leonardo, who now, with all the animation of his nature, interrupted his father, to beseech his concurrence to his having Cecilia immediately carried off, and then expressed the most lively hopes of succeeding in obtaining her hand, when once she should find herself wholly in his power. The apparently indulgent father soon ac-

quisced, and pointed out to his enraptured and amazed son the Castle of Torcello as the most proper and secure retreat for Cecilia to be conveyed to. He then advised his son to consult with Fabricio on the occasion, who would, he said, endeavour to find proper people to be employed in such an affair. Leonardo thanked his father in the most extravagant terms; declaring that the prospect of felicity thus presented to him, would prove a more efficacious remedy for his wound, than the whole Materia Medica could possibly supply.

Fabricio, privately instructed by the marchese, employed Masseron, a confidential friend of his own, and then arranged the whole of the plan for the carrying off Cecilia, while the latter appeared to leave every thing to his son and his valet.

From the moment in which Rovenza had first resolved to remove Cecilia from the villa, he determined to have her conveyed to the Castle of Torcello, whither he had sent Ursulina, immediately after her acknowledgment of having imposed upon him the tale of the lovely girl's being the daughter of Veronica di Udina.

The trembling Ursulina, who had rather expected imprisonment, and punishment from the rage of the marchese than to be thus provided for, had most joyfully agreed to take care of the castle, and to behave to the young lady, whom the marchese meant to send there, precisely as he should direct. Rovenza, in return, promised her every

possible indulgence, but assured her, that if ever she attempted to quit the castle without his permission, her life should pay the forfeit of her temerity in disobeying him. He was exact to his promise, and the person, who was to conduct this new housekeeper to her future abode, had instructions to allow her some peasant girl as a companion and assistant, and to provide the larders and cellars with every convenience and luxury which could render his son's projected temporary residence there agreeable.

Immediately when the marchese believed every thing to be in readiness for the reception of Cecilia at the Castle of Torcello, he gave his assent to her removal to the convent selected as her temporary abode, and the plan of her being forced away from the attendants, appointed to conduct her thither, was exactly calculated to prevent the slightest suspicion from falling upon himself or Leonardo; whose impatience to follow the lovely girl was such, that he could scarcely be prevailed upon by his father to attend to the proper means of recovering sufficient health to undertake the journey.

As soon as the servants and equipage returned with the account of Cecilia's being carried off by a band of robbers, for such they supposed them to be from the circumstance of their being so singularly and uniformly habited, the marchese openly avowed it as his belief that she had been thus

conveyed away by some of Angelo Guicciardini's men: a suggestion which Orazio was but too much inclined to credit, till he fortunately discovered that she had been conveyed to the Castle of Torcello, whither, as has already been related, he speedily followed her, and would have arrived there much earlier than he did, had not the accident which delayed him upon the road prevented him.

That he had set out on a quixotic expedition after Cecilia, Rovenza did not doubt; but, as he little imagined that he had discovered whither she had been conveyed, he was not under any particular alarm on the occasion, till, on examining the servants, he found that Orazio was in possession of the secret. To follow him, and endeavour to prevent the consequences which he dreaded would attend Orazio's meeting with Leonardo, was now the marchese's only resource, and, attended by his faithful Fabricio, he immediately set out for the Castle of Torcello.

On arriving at the castle, he was most pleasingly disappointed in finding that Orazio had not yet arrived; and, fatigued with the hurry of his journey, he retired to his chamber, without giving Leonardo any explanation of the motives for his visit. The apartment which the marchese occupied opened on the gallery into which Cecilia and Lodelli, in their attempt to find some avenue by which they could escape from the castle, entered, some hours

after he had retired to repose. In the anti-room, as usual, slept his constant guard Fabricio, who, hearing voices and footsteps in the gallery, rose to discover who was there, and opened the door precisely at the moment when Cecilia and her attendant, alarmed by the horrible form which they saw in the gallery, were flying from thence in all the precipitancy of terror. Although Fabricio had caught but a slight glimpse of these receding figures, he instantly recognized them, and, with the utmost caution, he pursued them, and witnessed the accidental meeting with Orazio. He continued to listen to their conversation, till they proceeded towards the apartment of Cecilia, when he immediately returned to the chamber of his lord, whom he informed of the whole affair. Rovenza now instantly hastened to surprise the lovers, and availing himself of the fabricated tale of their relationship, crushed at once all the fond hopes of Orazio and plunged him into despair. It has been seen with what art Rovenza managed this whole affair, while he endeavoured to calm the mind and divert the thoughts of Cecilia by the false hopes which he gave her of so soon seeing the Countess di Mirandini, of whose situation he was, in fact, still ignorant. Orazio he strongly urged to an immediate assent to the nuptials of his supposed sister with Leonardo, and the young man, struck with the apparent generosity of this proposal to unite an only son with an orphan

so circumstanced as Cecilia appeared to be, and willing to sacrifice his own immediate feelings to the delicacy of the lovely girl, who, he felt assured, would not support with fortitude the idea of being the object of a brother's culpable passion, yielded to the wishes of the marchese, and wrote the incoherent letter to Cecilia which induced her to determine on giving her hand to Leonardo di Rovenza. But unable, in the then state of his mind, to see her again, Orazio abruptly left the castle, and proceeded towards Venice, where he expected that the Count Ferbonino and the Bishop of Verona were already arrived.

To unite Cecilia immediately to his son, previous to returning with them to Venice, was, on reflection, all that remained for Rovenza to perform, when the singular and unexpected appearance of Angelo Guicciardini defeated his intentions, and threw him into a state of horror, alarm, and danger, from which he saw no means of extricating himself. That his treachery, ingratitude and cruelty to the Udina family were fully discovered by the robber, he felt the most dreadful conviction, and the only alternatives that then presented themselves to his guilty mind, was either to close his life by an act of suicide, or meet the fate which threatened him on his return to Venice. The racking contention of feelings which seized him during his interview with Angelo, rendered him, however, wholly incapable of reflection, and

the robber had not long departed, when he fell into such a state of distraction as seemed likely to put a speedy end to his miseries and his existence.

CHAP. VII.

MEANWHILE Orazio pursued his route to Venice, and in a frame of mind scarcely more enviable than that of Rovenza.—Disappointed in all the fascinating visions which youthful hope and animated affection paint in such glowing colours to a virtuous and enthusiastic heart, the future now presented nothing to his view but the drear and desert prospect of unceasing regret, selfcondemnation, and hopeless love; and, in the sickly disgust which pervaded his feelings, he would have flown for ever from the world, and renounced all that fame and fortune could offer to his acceptance, had not the duty which he owed to the memory of his father, and the expectation of raising his too-fondly loved sister to the exaltation which she was born to inherit and adorn, urged him to exertion.

On arriving at Venice, he found that the Count Ferbonino had been there about a week, and was in the utmost distress and uneasiness at his absence, and that the Bishop of Verona was hourly expected.—The count, however, had been utterly unsuccessful in his researches after Biondello,

but was determined to make his application to the council on the confession of Velasquez Maretti. The proofs of Orazio's birth, left by the Count di Mirandini, were apparently sufficiently strong to confirm his identity, and as the cause was not likely to meet the opposition, but rather the support of the Rovenza family, the Count Ferbonino did not apprehend any disappointment to his wishes.

Orazio's being in the Venetian army was no infringement of the decree of the senate, as that had merely doomed the children of Udina to death in case they returned openly from banishment, and bore their family name; and this enforced renunciation of title and rank, once so illustrious, was considered as the most severe of punishments.

On the day after Orazio's arrival, the Bishop of Verona joined the Count Ferbonino at his palace: but an obstacle now existed to an immediate appeal to the senate, for which the friends of the young Udina were utterly unprepared. This was Cecilia's supposed claims to the name of Udina.

When Orazio informed the Count Ferbonino of this circumstance, the latter could not give the least credit to it. Nothing could appear more improbable to him than that the Countess di Mirandini should have practised such an absurd imposition; and, at length, he very justly concluded that the marchese must have

been either grossly deceived, or had been actuated to make such an assertion by some deep and secret motive. At all events, it was now become necessary that the countess should be brought forward, in order to prove the falsehood of the charge, and that Rovenza should compel Ursulina to make a public declaration of the truth.

The first step to be taken was now to exert every possible means of discovering where the countess was concealed. It was evident that Angelo Guicciardini was acquainted with her situation, and to him only could any application be made on the subject.

But where was Angelo to be found?—In short, in all respects this circumstance plunged the friends of Orazio into the most vexatious difficulties, whilst he himself was in a state nearly bordering on distraction; and insisted upon being permitted to return immediately to the Castle of Torcello, to snatch his adored Cecilia from the fate to which he had so rashly, and with so much facility, resigned her.

The count, now doubtful of the good intentions towards the youth himself, of the Marchese di Rovenza, peremptorily opposed this step; but at length the entreaties of Orazio overcame his resolution, and he himself determined on accompanying him thither. Early on the following morning they were on the road to the Caderino, and had proceeded with all the

expedition with which the age and infirmities of the count would permit them to travel, till they reached Bassano, where, to their utmost surprise, they encountered the Marchese di Rovenza, and his attendants.

Orazio, now fully acquainted with the story of the Countess di Mirandini, which had just been related to him by his noble friend, and irritated to the utmost degree of impetuosity by his newly awakened suspicions of Rovenza's views, allowed not a moment to explanation ere he demanded, where was Cecilia. The marchese, with looks of haggard malice, haughtily repulsed him, and, apparently disdaining to reply to his enquiry, turned to his attendants, and commanded some of them instantly to seize him, and directed the assistance of the police to be summoned. Equally astonished and indignant, the Count Ferbonino now interfered, and required an explanation of such extraordinary conduct.

"My explanation shall be given before a Venetian tribunal, Signor Count," replied the marchese. "I have been the dupe of robbers and impostors.—You will also do well to extricate yourself, as speedily as you can, from connections so disgraceful to your rank, and injurious to your judgment.—I arrest this young man as one of the bandit horde of Angelo Guicciardini, and accuse him of combining with that atrocious robber to impose upon me a fabricated tale, intended to despoil

me of my lawful possessions, and of having assisted to plunder and burn the Castle of Torcello."

The fury of Orazio, and the amazement of the Count Ferbonino, were now so excessive that neither had power to enquire further; and, in a few minutes, the entrance of several officers of the police rendered present investigation unnecessary.

While the marchese repeated his charge, and committed Orazio to the care of the officers, with directions to have him immediately conveyed to Venice, the count briefly advised the enraged youth to submit to the arrest, and then demanded of the marchese, what had become of Cecilia,

"The pupil of Angelo Guicciardini can best inform you, count, whither his master has conveyed her," contemptuously answered Rovenza, and instantly left the room, repeating his orders for Orazio's immediate removal to Venice.

The agonizing emotions which Orazio suffered at this moment were great beyond description. Struggling to free himself from the rough grasp of his guards, he vowed no power on earth should drag him from the spot, till informed of the fate of his beloved Cecilia. With the utmost difficulty the Count Ferbonino prevailed upon him to forbear so unavailing a resistance, and succeeded in persuading the officers to delay a few moments, while he proceeded to the apartment to which Rovenza had withdrawn, and once more made

an ineffectual effort to learn from him somewhat relative to Cecilia. But the marchese was inflexibly silent, and the count soon retired in anger and disgust.

The situation of mind in which Orazio was now hurried away, may be more easily imagined than described. The count accompanied him to Venice, and left him not until he was immured in the prison of Saint Mark, where he was to remain without examination, till the arrival of the marchese, which was expected to take place on the following day.

CHAP. VIII.

When Rovenza arrived, he immediately solicited an audience of the council, to whom he related, in the most artful manner, such circumstances respecting his conduct towards Orazio, as placed his own proceedings in the most favourable point of view, and led them to believe that he had indeed been the dupe of the vilest imposition.

"In acting as I have done," said he, "in clandestinely receiving this young man, I imagine I have erred against the authority of the state; but I throw myself on the mercy of those laws which are the most remarkable for their strict justice.— I will confess, that from the moment of Costanza di Udina's death, the fate of his

orphan children has been one of the deepest interests of my heart. To cherish these infant desolates;—to procure the reversal of that awful decree, which pronounced them aliens from their country, and deprived them of their name, rank, and fortune, has been my unvarying hope, and to this end have I unceasingly, though in secret, exerted every effort to discover whither they had been conveyed by the unfortunate Count and Countess di Mirandini; and when at length I had reason to suppose that I had succeeded in finding the son of Udina, in the young man who has, I fear, so much imposed upon me and the worthy Count Ferbonino, can it be astonishing that I received him with open arms, and determined to use my utmost influence to recover for him that illustrious birth-right, of which his father's imputed crime had deprived him:—or that I was most eager to clear the memory of my cousin from the infamy which I now believed to be erroneously attached to his name?"

Thus did the subtle Rovenza give a fictitious colouring to his own actions; and finally persuaded his attentive and astonished hearers that he had been actuated in all he had done by the most just, noble, and generous sentiments.

Remembering the share he had had in the ruin of the father, they imputed to the desire of reparation, inspired by virtuous remorse and sorrow, the incautious kindness he had shewn to Orazio, and were

lost in admiration and respect, as he proceeded to add,

"All I now demand is a clear investigation of this mysterious business. Let the Count Ferbonino be summoned before this righteous tribunal, and command those proofs which have imposed upon him and me a credulous belief in the identity of this young man, to be produced.--I am ready to stand the test of the most scrutinizing investigation, and shall abide by the decree of the council; but I can no longer suffer myself to be the dupe of plunderers and impostors."

Notes were then made of thedepositions and request of the marchese, and he was at length dismissed to his pallazo, with a command to hold himself in readiness for a summons to the next examination of the affair.

The Count Ferbonino was now summoned before the tribunal, and commanded to give an unreserved declaration of all he knew respecting Orazio, and his own motives for taking so peculiar an interest in the fortunes of that young man.

The count, with much brevity and ani mation, answered, "My motive for exerting myself in the cause of him, whom I suppose to be the son of the unfortunate Costanza di Udina, was merely the humane interest which is ever inspired in a mind of any degree of feeling for the injured and unhappy.

"I was in Venice, when I most unexpectedly received a letter from the Count di Mirandini, detailing to me an account of his long seclusion in the Alps, and imploring my protection and support for the young Orazio di Udina. This pathetic appeal—an appeal made by a dying friend, was followed by a relation of the death and confession of Velasquez Maretti; and if, on reading this, I erred in believing that Costanza had fallen the victim of treachery and appearances, it was through defect of judgment only."

The count was then ordered to produce that letter for the inspection of the judges. He immediately took it from his pocket-book, and presented it to the secretary.—It was read aloud, and the judges were visibly affected by the sincerity and feeling which every line evinced, till towards the conclusion, where Mirandini had referred the Count Ferbonino to the robber Angelo Guicciardini, as the possessor of the confession of Velasquez. As the secretary read this passage, murmurs of surprise, dissatisfaction, and displeasure, gradually increased among the inquisition, till, at length, the chief state inquisitor abruptly interrupted the reader, by demanding of the count, whether he had received the written confession from the hands of the Count di Mirandini himself, or from those of the robber Angelo.

"From Guicciardini," replied the count.

"I met him by my own appointment at Sesto, whence I expected him to conduct me to the secluded abode of my friend Mirandini, whom, I then, to my infinite regret, learned was no more."

The expressions, "Flagrant deception!—weak and unpardonable credulity!—erroneous conduct!"—muttered by several voices, here interrupted the count, till the chief inquisitor, silencing those around him with a reprehending glance, addressed Ferbonino, and said,

"Then the young man, who is the principal subject of this cause, was introduced to your notice by Angelo Guicciardini?"

"He was."

"You must be sensible, on reflection, that you acted with extreme weakness in confiding solely to the assertion of this bandit, for the truth of Orazio's identity."

"I confided chiefly in the letter of the Count di Mirandini for my belief of that fact."

"Then you still believe it to be a fact!" angrily exclaimed one of the inquisitors.

"I have not so affirmed," replied the count. "The decision of this assembly must settle that point."

"You were acquainted with the Countess di Mirandini," said the inquisitor—"and visited her as the Signora di Berlotti, at her cottage.—Had you any intention

of so doing, when you left Venice for the retreat of her husband ?"

"I knew not that the countess was then still living, till I was informed so by Angelo Guicciardini in our first interview."

New murmurs of surprise and indignation were now heard in the hall. Ferbonino, without attending to them, continued, "I visited the cottage of that lady at his request."

"But you previously had had some personal acquaintance with the Countess di Mirandini ?"

"I had never seen her till the time to which I now allude."

"Astonishing credulity !" now exclaimed the inquisitor.—"How then are you even certain that the person to whom you were then introduced, is, in reality, the supposed deceased Countess di Mirandini ?"

"Her knowledge of many circumstances, with which only as the wife of my friend she could be particularly acquainted, and the production of some letters written by her lord, assured me of the fact."

"But of these circumstances she might have been informed by the robber Angelo, who also probably put her in possession of the letters which you mention."

This observation convinced the Count Ferbonino that the inquisitors were already so much prejudiced that he knew not what to reply, lest all he should say might be construed unfavourably.

After a short pause, the inquisitor that had spoken last, added, "And did not the least apprehension of being deceived ever arise in your mind on the commencement of this affair, count?"

"None. Had such been the case, I would not have endeavoured to interest my friends in favour of Orazio."

"Where was this Orazio first introduced to you?"

"I saw him for the first time at the priory of San Ambrose."

"Take care you are not in error, count," said the chief inquisitor. "Had you not a previous interview with him at the cottage?"

The count repeated, that he had first met Orazio at the priory.

"What was Angelo Guicciardini's motive for placing him at the cottage?"

"Chiefly the wish of effecting an union between Orazio and the young Cecilia di Mirandini," replied the count.

"What are the proofs which you possess of Orazio's birth?"

"Nothing more than the letter of the Count di Mirandini, the dress and ornaments which the child wore when he was carried away by the count, and some jewels formerly belonging to the Countess Veronica di Udina, but those articles are I believe now in the possession of Cecilia di Mirandini."

The count was then directed to produce the dress and ornaments at the next exa-

mination. One of the inquisitors then said,

"As you have evinced so singular a confidence in Guicciardini, you are doubtless well acquainted with his real rank and mode of life, prior to his becoming the chief of a band of robbers."

The count professed the most entire ignorance on those points.

Such severe observations were now made on Ferbonino's credulity and precipitation in believing and engaging in so intricate and mysterious a business, without respectable authority, that the count himself at length appeared confounded by the review of his own conduct, and reluctantly confessed that his enthusiasm had certainly impelled him to act without a proper degree of consideration.

To several other questions put to him respecting Angelo Guicciardini, he gave such replies as evinced that the robber had cautiously avoided entering into any explanations relative to himself in their few interviews, and that the generous Ferbonino had confided in him merely from the manner in which he was mentioned in the letter of the Count di Mirandini.

The Count Ferbonino was next desired to declare what was the motive for placing Orazio in the Venetian army.

"To give him an opportunity of displaying his talents and merits, and to procure him friends, prior to the intended appeal."

The principal inquisitor now looked sternly at the count, and said,

"Your conduct throughout the whole of this affair manifests either the most culpable inconsideration or deep and secret designs." Ferbonino started. "The emotion you betray, count, seems to indicate the latter. You have privately supported, and intended to bring forward to the notice and favour of the state, a youth, educated by a man whose extraordinary character and actions have long proved him capable of the most daring and extensive plans. A government, just and penetrating as our's, cannot behold unmoved so singular an event. During your examination, you have certainly used some prevarication, and therefore we order you under immediate confinement."

The amazement of the count was now extreme; but too conscious of his innocence to deign to remonstrate, he bowed a silent submission to this decree of the assembly, and was immediately conducted to prison.

As the count withdrew, Orazio di Udina was brought in. This was the first time he had appeared before the tribunal, and his figure seemed to make no slight impression upon his scrutinizing examiners.

After the usual forms, he was desired to give a correct account of himself, and to reveal the real nature of his connection with the robber Angelo; and was very emphatically warned of the danger which

awaited his using either falsehood or evasion.

The indignant spirit of Orazio would have induced him to refuse answering any questions, unconnected with the charge upon which he had been arrested, had not the idea suddenly occurred to him, that a clear and candid detail of his life would be the best means of preventing his friends from being involved in any trouble on his account. Influenced by this consideration, he commenced a sincere relation of every incident that had occurred to him, from his earliest years to the hour of his being apprehended.

The whole was heard with the most profound attention; and when he ceased to speak, he was immediately ordered from the hall. When he was conducted out, the principal inquisitor commanded the secretary to read the statement, which he had taken down from the mouth of Orazio, and, after various observations on the probable truth or falsehood of the detail, the youth was again called before the tribunal.

"When did you last see and converse with Guicciardini?" was the first question now proposed to him.

Orazio, with a look of surprise, replied, "I have already informed this assembly, that the last time I saw Angelo Guicciardini was in Venice."

"You had better confess that you had an interview with him prior to his plunder-

ing and burning the Castle of Torcello; and that you also are acquainted with his motive for carrying off the young woman, called Cecilia di Berlotti, from the protection of the Marchese di Rovenza:—we have means of discovering the truth, and of punishing falsehood, equally certain and awful." For a moment, Orazio now stood silent and confounded with amazement, at the intelligence conveyed in this accusation. When at length he recovered himself, it was only to exclaim, "Then Rovenza is indeed a villain, and my Cecilia safe!" It is impossible to describe the effect which this ill-timed and inadvertent exclamation produced. Several of the inquisitors started up, and, in an instant the hall resounded with expressions of astonishment and anger. Orazio, now aware of his imprudence, but too proudly conscious of his own integrity, and too noble-minded to attempt a vindication of himself, silently awaited the torrent of indignation rushing to overwhelm him.

After a few moments, passed in conferring with each other, the inquisitors resumed their places, and the principal inquisitor, turning to the prisoner, with a look of indignation said, "Your recent exclamation has removed every trace of those doubts which your seemingly ingenuous detail was calculated to raise. It is now certain that you hold a deep and private understanding with Guicciardini. Hence we infer that your narrative is an

audacious fabrication, and we feel ourselves justified in pronouncing you an accomplished impostor. You will do well to make an immediate declaration of the truth, if you wish to escape the terrible means which must otherwise be employed to extort it."

The deep glow of manly rectitude rose on the cheek of Orazio, and gave additional fire to his dark expressive eyes; and his tall, graceful form displayed the animation of an undaunted mind, as, in a firm but respectful tone, he replied,

"Had I merited the opprobrious epithet of 'accomplished impostor,' I should not have committed the error which has subjected me to the threat of tortures, which my innocence will enable me to endure with a fortitude unknown to guilt."

"Insolent!—Dost thou brave our power!" cried the chief inquisitor, while his sonorous voice trembled with indignation—"Lead him to experience those tortures which he dares, and let their fierceness be adapted to the force of that spirit of obstinacy and defiance which he thus boldly manifests."

In an instant the accustomed signal was given, and several officers rushed in to seize the prisoner, who calmly resigned himself into their hands, and was immediately hurried from the hall. Just at this instant an officer hastily entered, and presented to the principal inquisitor a sealed paper. Scarcely had he perused three lines of the contents, when, with sul-

len haughtiness, he directed that Orazio should be conducted back to his cell, and the preparations for present torture suspended. The hall was then cleared of all but a few of the superior inquisitors, who immediately proceeded to examine the paper.

CHAP. IX.

During these proceedings the Marchese di Rovenza shut himself up in his pallazo to reflect upon the probable consequences of the steps he had already taken relative to Orazio, and to deliberate how he should best secure himself from further trouble or danger, by effectually criminating the unfortunate youth, whose confidence in his treacherous relative, had brought him to the brink of destruction. Rovenza's sudden accusation of Orazio had proceeded rather from desperation than the hope of finally crushing him; yet, as he was certain that, could the crimes with which Angelo Guicciardini had charged him be substantiated, his disgrace and ruin must be inevitable, he felt he had hazarded nothing in making an effort to save himself. For near two days, after the visit of Guicciardini to the Castle of Torcello, the marchese had remained in all the horrors of that distraction into which the unexpected appearance of the robber had thrown him, and had it not been for the measures

pursued by Fabricio to restore him to reason, it is most probable he would not have survived the shock. When, however, he was sufficiently composed for the latter to venture to speak seriously on the occurrence which had so much deranged him, this confidential emissary vehemently asked him what he had to dread from a robber, if he chose to exert himself before his adversary could have time to plan any new attack. He then advised him to proceed immediately to Venice, and lay a formal complaint before the senate. Rovenza, amid all his confusion, was still too cautious to entrust Fabricio with what had passed between himself and Angelo, but his advice suggested to him a vague idea of giving up his nephew as an impostor, and thus attempting to defeat the designs of the dreaded Guicciardini. This half-formed plan he did not, however, then communicate to Fabricio, but, after a reflective pause, enquired why his son had not yet come to congratulate him upon his recovery. Fabricio readily replied, that the Signor Leonardo had set out for Venice; and the marchese was then too much displeased at this circumstance to ask any further questions concerning him. In this instance his confidant deceived him, but certainly with a humane intention: for the unfortunate Leonardo imprudently attempting to oppose Angelo's men, soon fell covered with wounds, and the banditti hurled his body amid the burning ruins of

the tower. As soon as the marchese had assented to Fabricio's advice, the latter hastened to give the necessary directions for the journey.

Rovenza then began to reflect seriously on the scheme of appealing to the state inquisition of Venice, and tolerably well arranged the artful detail which he afterwards gave to the council. His unexpected meeting with Orazio and the Count Ferbonino accelerated the affair more than he intended; but the favourable reception given to his accusation of his nephew left him no immediate cause to regret what he had done. Still, however, the incertitude of his own situation excited considerable irritation in his mind, and he now found the advice of Fabricio of more essential service than at any other period. Conscious of the occasional inability of his own mental powers, Rovenza had been compelled to reveal to this man some part of his plans; but he took care to endeavour to persuade this subservient confidant that he, in reality, now believed that Orazio was not his nephew, but the well-instructed pupil of Angelo Guicciardini. Fabricio, whatever might be his private doubts on this subject, readily affected to credit the assertions of his lord; and, in the course of their conferences, gave him some very artful and cunningly devised hints how to proceed in order to substantiate the charges against Orazio, while he still carefully concealed from Rovenza the

death of his son, lest this information might totally incapacitate him for the execution of his plans. Meanwhile the Marchesa di Rovenza still remained at the Villa di Rovenza, with her friend the Signora della Albina. Uninformed of her lord's return to Venice, and ignorant of the events which were passing there, she yet suffered the most painful anxiety respecting Cecilia and Orazio: and her unhappiness was increased by the situation of her daughter Ottavania, whom rage and vexation, at the sudden departure of Orazio, had thrown into a fever so violent as to leave but few hopes of her recovery.

During this period of grief no visitors were admitted at the villa; and thus the marchesa was, for some time, spared the knowledge of those rumours which began to be whispered in Venice, relative to the critical circumstances in which the marchese was involved by his denunciation of Orazio. These reports, however, at length became known to the Count Carraci, the relative of the Signora della Albina, who was at this time at Padua, and who, notwithstanding the secrecy usually observed by the state inquisition, was soon enabled to learn sufficient of the affair to be certain that Orazio was in confinement, and that the marchese was concerned in his arrest. Judging it necessary that the amiable Marchesa di Rovenza should be immediately informed of this event, the count hastily proceeded to the Villa di Rovenza,

and, in a private interview with the Signora della Albina, communicated the distressing intelligence. The astonishment and alarm experienced by that lady on the occasion may easily be imagined. With the utmost caution and gentleness, she informed the marchesa of the situations of her supposed nephew and her lord; but all the signora's care and tenderness were insufficient to prevent the marchesa from falling into violent convulsions on her receiving such a shock.

Two days elapsed ere she was restored to reason and composure; when, notwithstanding her weakness, she insisted upon proceeding immediately to Venice. The signora, soon finding her entreaties to induce her friend to suspend her departure till she was rather more recovered unavailing, at length consigned her to the care of her women, and, at the earnest request of the marchesa, remained with Ottavania, from whom the recent dreadful intelligence was studiously concealed, as well as from the prying curiosity of the Signoras Bellinzetto, who were still too much under the controul of self-interest to leave their dupe even for a moment.

No sooner had the marchesa arrived at the Pallazo di Rovenza at Venice, than she requested an interview with her lord, of whom she instantly demanded an explanation of the reports which had so dreadfully alarmed her. With haughty brevity, he replied, that they were in a

degree true: that he had too long been the dupe of impostors, and was now resolved to obtain justice and redress. Deigning not to give any farther explanation, he was retiring, when the earnest entreaties of the marchesa, to inform her on what account Orazio had been arrested, and where Cecilia was, induced him to pause, and add, that the issue of the impending trial would probably inform her of all, and even more than she might wish to hear. Then, wholly unmindful of her tears and importunities, he quitted the room, sternly commanding her to confine herself to her apartments, and to make no further enquiries on the subject.

The heart-broken Hortensia, thus repulsed and insulted, yielded up herself to the agonizing fears and incertitude that had seized her, and was soon so ill, as to be incapable of disobeying the commands of her imperious lord.

CHAP. X.

Several days elapsed ere the Count Ferbonino or Orazio underwent a second examination. They were again separately interrogated; but as these examinations were nearly similar to the first, it is unnecessary to recapitulate them.

Meanwhile the most vigilant measures were employed for the discovery and ap-

prehension of Angelo Guicciardini, and placards, offering pardon and large rewards to any of his associates who would give him up, or present themselves before the tribunal of the inquisition, were soon posted in all the churches and public buildings of the Venetian states.

After several days of awful suspense Orazio was once more summoned to a private examination. Only three inquisitors were now present, and the manner of addressing the prisoner was totally altered. Severity and threats were now exchanged for persuasion and exhortations; and the most solemn promises of pardon offered, to induce him to confess his supposed collusion with the Bandit Angelo. Gracefully acknowledging the indulgence of his examiners, Orazio, with mild yet manly firmness, repeated that he had already given the most unequivocal explanation of his connection with Angelo Guicciardini.

The inquisitors, though soon convinced that their utmost art could not seduce or extort from him the kind of confession which they desired, did not alter their manner, but, with much seeming lenity, advised him to endeavour to bring forward some evidence in his favour; and offered to give an immediate summons to any friend that he thought could serve him.

Orazio observed in return, that since the evidence produced by the Count Ferbonino had proved insufficient, it would be equally

useless for him to mention any other friends who might feel inclined to favour him; as they could adduce no further proofs of his identity or innocence, than those already in the possession of the count.

He was then asked, whether he was acquainted with the person of the Father Salvati, the priest who had taken the confession of the assassin Velasquez Maretti.

He replied in the negative. One of the inquisitors, then taking a parcel from the table, unfolded it, and displaying the habiliments of a child, desired him to say if they had ever belonged to himself.

Orazio, after a slight view of the dress, said, that he believed it to be the same which had frequently been shewn to him by the Count di Mirandini, as the habit in which he had been taken when an infant by that nobleman from the Villa di Mirandini.

After a short pause, one of the inquisitors, a grave and venerable looking man, whose countenance bespoke a benignant humanity, apparently incompatible with the severity of his office, said,

"Young man, I feel so deep an interest in your fate, that, in your favour, I venture to deviate from our usual rules, in the hope that, if your heart is not totally depraved, and your principles too confirmed in vice to be reclaimable, you may be won by the unexampled lenity shewn you. To prove how sincere are our wishes of serving

you, and, at the same time, to remove any illusive hopes, with which a consciousness of your own intellectual powers may have inspired you, I point out to you the real state of your situation.—Not only your own life, but the lives of those illustrious persons who have so strangely espoused your cause, depend upon your confession of the truth.

"It is but too evident that, if not the agent, you are at least the tool of Guicciardini; for it is impossible to believe that had the person who brought you up in the wild haunts of that robber been really the Count di Mirandini, he would have taken care to provide better evidence of his own and your identity, than that which has so incredibly imposed upon the Count Ferbonino and the Marchese di Rovenza: In mercy to you, I will even acquaint you, that in the fabricated confession of Velasquez Maretti, there is a palpable contradiction of facts relative to the Count Costanza di Udina; facts of which the state inquisition are alone informed, and it cannot be doubted that Guicciardini, availing himself of his knowledge of the fate of Udina's children, has, in order to accomplish some deep and private plans of his own, contrived the scheme of raising you to one of the most illustrious ranks in Venice. Were it otherwise, unequivocal proofs of your identity would have been brought forward. No doubts would have been suffered to exist respecting the Count

di Mirandini, nor would the Countess di Mirandini be thus inexplicably concealed: but——"

Here the benevolent speaker was interrupted by one of the other inquisitors, who rather severely reminded him, that he was transgressing every rule of prudence, in revealing to the prisoner circumstances with which it was not necessary he should be acquainted.

Orazio now, with looks evincing all the gratitude of his soul, once more acknowledged his sense of the lenient measures which were pursued with him; and then, in the most solemn manner, assured his examiners that he had inviolably adhered to truth in the declarations he had already made; and though fully aware of the danger of his situation, he had no resource but to resign himself with fortitude to his destiny.

The ingenuousness of his manner produced the effect of still more deeply interesting the friendly inquisitor in his favour; and he was dismissed to his cell with the same gentleness with which he had been received.

The calmness with which Orazio di Udina appeared before his judges vanished whenever he returned to his cell. The representations of the good inquisitor, respecting the positive danger of his circumstances, had all been anticipated by his own reflections. He knew that his destruction was unavoidable, and he felt that he

should never more behold the lovely object of his tenderest adoration. The idea that she loved him now threw him into the deepest anguish, as imagination pictured her distraction when informed of his dreadful fate.—That she was in some place of safety he ventured to believe; for he could not conquer the involuntary conviction that Angelo Guicciardini had now taken effectual means to secure her beyond the reach of danger. But although some relief was afforded to the tortured heart of Orazio by this hope, still his mental sufferings were more acute than all the torments with which he was threatened could have proved. Respecting his own identity, and the truth of his story, he had no doubts, but he could not but perceive that appearances were expressly calculated to condemn him, and in his ruin was too probably involved the fate of those who had so precipitately interested themselves in his behalf. To save those valued friends, he had unreservedly revealed every incident of his life, and had as forcibly represented the integrity of their intentions, as his fears of injuring them, by betraying too earnest a zeal for their security, would permit. Unsuspicious that the treacherous Rovenza had been the secret cause of his father's destruction, he attributed his persecution of himself merely to the wish of enjoying his hereditary possessions, and believed that the attack which Angelo Guicciardini had made upon the Castle of

Torcello, was in consequence of his having by some means discovered the base hypocrisy and bad intentions of the marchese. Still, however, there was so much mystery attached to the events in which Orazio had been recently engaged, that he could not form a conclusive decision on any one circumstance, except that of his arrest by the state inquisition, of the awful termination of which he felt but too certain. The present gentleness with which he was treated, he well knew could not long continue, and he looked forward to the probability of experiencing every torture which the vengeance of the inquisition could inflict, in order to compel him to criminate the unfortunate friends who had so fatally exposed themselves to ruin on his account. To the undaunted mind of Orazio the anticipation of these torments gave no alarm: within the confines of his cell he endured mental tortures far more excruciating than any which human tyranny could inflict. For the mildness which he had experienced in his recent examination, he could no otherwise account, than by supposing, that the council had judged it expedient to try the effects, that gentleness might produce on a mind which they believed could not be subdued by severity. Though his supposition was partly just, yet this was not exactly the case. The late lenient proceedings of the inquisition originated in another cause. The paper, which has been already mentioned, was an address

from the Bishop of Verona, stating the arrival of the Father Salvati, the friar who had taken the dying confession of the assassin Velasquez.

On the perusal of this epistle, the council gave immediate directions for the bishop and the father to appear before their tribunal. From the examination of the good bishop, it was soon ascertained that the interest he had manifested for Orazio could be imputed only to the entreaties of the Count Ferbonino; and as this venerable character was well known to be one of the firmest friends of the state, he was not kept under arrest, and to his affecting and pious representations in behalf of Orazio, may partly be attributed the determination of the council to suspend their accustomed severity towards the prisoner, till they could summon and arrest all parties implicated in the affair, and give it the deepest investigation.

The examination of the Father Salvati was, however, too important not to claim the utmost attention. After the usual forms, he stated that he had at such a period received the confession of Velasquez Maretti, and declared that he could not doubt its truth, as he was perfectly convinced that the unfortunate man died truly penitent. He then said, that he was on his way homeward from Compostella, when the letters of the Count Ferbonino reached him, and that he had travelled from Spain to Venice with all the dispatch

which so important a summons required him to use.

The evidence of the father perfectly corresponded with the accounts already given by the Count Ferbonino and Orazio, but this holy man displayed so much emotion and so deep an interest in the fate of the youth, that the inquisitors, but too strongly prejudiced by the artful representations of Rovenza, were more inclined to believe that the good father had some share in the collusion which they imagined to exist, than to receive his declaration as proof of Orazio's innocence. With much authoritative severity, he was asked, how a man of his holy function could visit the haunts of a bandit chief with so much confidence, expecially of one who was known to exercise the most vindictive cruelty to men of his order.

The contour of the friar's face and figure was that which indicated the bending meekness, the pensive mildness of character which distinguish the possessor of a soul abstracted from all sublunary pursuits; but, in this instance, a long-absent gleam of animation brightened his eyes, and elated his form, when he replied:—

"As the teacher of that sublime and holy faith, inculcated by the pure spirit of divine love, of peace and mercy, I have ever considered that the "charity which hopeth and believeth all things," commanded me never to shrink from the performance

of my duty; nor to let appearances, or the fear of personal danger, deter me from visiting the haunts of the most atrocious criminal; much less would I have denied to enter those of Angelo Guicciardini: a man whose crimes are errors, for they are the effects of a mistaken judgment, not of a depraved or vicious heart. It is true, he assumes a power with which he is invested neither by divine, nor human authority; but that power is exercised only to sustain and avenge the cause of the afflicted, the defenceless, and the oppressed; and to execute that justice on guilt and cruelty, from which the possession of wealth and influence secures them in a world which sacrifices virtue, innocence, and worth to the glitter of exalted vice. What is that severity which Angelo is accused of exercising towards men of my vocation?—While with holy penitential humility, he bows before the meek and sincere professors of our holy faith, and, with pious awe, reveres the virtues which he cannot imitate, he is, indeed, the avenging scourge of those who, beneath the sacred garb of religious sanctity, conceal all the vices that spring from the rapacious spirit of self-interest, bigotry, avarice, and cruelty."

If the amazement and anger of some of the inquisitors had before been excited by the cool fortitude of the Count Ferbonino, and the noble contempt of danger manifested by Orazio di Udina, how much more were they now astonished and confounded

by the language of the pale and holy Father Salvati: he whose appearance bespoke the innate integrity of a soul superior to all worldly considerations, but while humbled pride and repressed indignation convulsed the features of some of the members of the council, there were several whose judicious penetration enabled them to form a rational judgment of the father's temerity in addressing them in such a manner, and who felt that collusive guilt durst never hazard so bold a vindication of one whom the public voice condemned. One of these inquisitors, a nobleman, who, as one of the prosecutors of St. Mark, had already evinced a noble, generous spirit, was now most peculiarly interested by the Father Salvati, and, from this moment secretly resolved to exert his utmost power in behalf of the prisoners, and retard all severe proceedings against them, till a full evidence could be procured either of their guilt or innocence. It was this inquisitor whose looks and language had evinced so much concern for Orazio, and who had also strenuously recommended to the other members of the council to adopt those lenient measures which they afterwards pursued.

The Father Salvati, as a witness of so much importance, was now confined, yet he was treated with all the indulgence which his situation admitted.

The exertions for the apprehension of Angelo Guicciardini were immediately re-

doubled. An official summons was sent off to the Father Ascollini, and enquiries ordered to be made after the cottagers with whom the Count di Mirandini had lodged after his flight from the Paduano. M. d'Erville, the friend who had transacted the sale of the Count's Tuscan estates was also summoned.

CHAP. XI.

TEN days had elapsed from the period of the Father Salvati's arrival in Venice, when the Marchese di Rovenza was suddenly arrested in his pallazo, and hurried before the tribunal of the council, then formally assembled in their principal hall of trial.

Prepared as was Rovenza for such an event, he was yet utterly confounded when it really took place, and he entered the hall, labouring under all the tortures of anticipated ruin. A few moments, apparently allowed him for recollection, were employed by the inquisitors in keen observation of the emotion he betrayed, and by which they hoped to scrutinize the most secret feelings of his soul.

Rovenza observed this, and the involuntary shudder that convulsed his frame, was soon succeeded by that kind of sullen coolness with which despair sometimes inspires the guilty.

This change was not unmarked by the chief inquisitor, who now, with impressive solemnity, addressing him, said:—

"Arnolfo di Rovenza, you are not now here as the accuser, but as the accused, and are commanded in the name of the state to answer to the horrible charge of having, by the most malicious and abominable machinations, effected the destruction of a family, once as illustrious for their virtues as their rank. We demand, therefore, a confession of a crime, the evidence of which is so strong as to leave us no doubts as to your guilt.—Reveal to us the motives which urged you to an act so treacherous, base and cruel."

While the chief inquisitor spoke, Rovenza became considerably agitated, and his wild and varying looks seemed to demand the nature of the evidence on which he was accused, and, in a voice almost inaudible, he replied:—

"If to have sacrificed the feelings of gratitude, of private friendship, and almost fraternal regard, to the duty which I owed the state, can constitute a crime, I was undoubtedly guilty in denouncing Costanza di Udina as a traitor to the state."

"Hypocritical prevarication!" cried the chief inquisitor, while a frown of anger and contempt marked his features.—"Dare you presume that your arts can a second time impose upon the confidence of the tribunal before which you stand? or can you hope to escape the vengeance of the insult-

ed state, whose awful justice you have pervertedinto the instrument of your diabolical villainy? Biondello de Balvo, come forth."

A faint and convulsed cry of amazement and horror now passed the pallid lips of Rovenza, as with the fixed gaze of despair, he beheld a group of the inquisitorial officers fall back, and reveal to his view the wretched, meagre form of Biondello, who scarcely able to support himself upon the chair on which he sat, seemed like a ghastly spectre risen from the dead to confound and condemn the author of his miseries.

For the space of a few minutes the eyes of Rovenza were rivetted on this woe-worn object, till, at length, yielding to the conviction that his fate was now determined, and his ruin inevitable, he fell into those convulsive spasms which usually proceeded his fits of mental derangement.

His situation now suspended all further proceedings in his examination, and he was removed from the hall to his dungeon, where proper medical assistance was soon afforded him, with the view of rendering him capable of undergoing those punishments which the council were so eager to inflict upon one who had so grossly abused their credulity and power.

The revolution which had now taken place in Rovenza's circumstances, was effected by the sudden surrender of two of Angelo Guicciardini's men, who, claiming the promise of mercy and reward held out

to them in the placards of the state inquisition, had, on the preceding night, presented themselves at St. Mark's, with Biondello, whom they gave up as a most important witness against the Marchese di Rovenza. The narrative which this wretched being gave to the council bore too strongly the stamp of truth to admit of doubt. He related the manner in which Rovenza had prevailed upon him to commit those crimes which had ruined the house of Udina, and affirmed that he had been released from the dreadful imprisonment with which the marchese had rewarded his villainy by Angelo Guicciardini, when the latter entered, and burned the Castle of Torcello.

He, as well as the two robbers who accompanied him, were then separately examined as to the places to which Angelo had retired, after he left the castle. Each declared that he had proceeded to one of the secret haunts of Angelo, in the Alps of the Cadorino, where they had remained but a short time, when an order from himself commanded them to hasten with all possible speed to Venice, and deliver Biondello into the hands of the state inquisition; informing them, at the same time, that in claiming the offered mercy of the council, they would avoid all personal danger. The robbers were then questioned relative to the present retreat of Angelo, and, in reply, solemnly declared that they could not say where he then was, as he had warned them that he should carefully con-

ceal himself, though he gave them full liberty to make known his usual places of resort.

Disappointed as was the council in the discovery of the robber's secret haunts, they soon perceived that it was useless to proceed to any extremities with men, from whom it was evident that Angelo certainly had taken care to conceal his retreat, and immediately turned their whole attention towards the strange and unexpected accusation of the Marchese di Rovenza, of whose guilt the testimony of Biondello left them in no doubt; and an immediate order was given for the arrest of Rovenza and his valet Fabricio; and as both were separately seized, the marchese was entirely ignorant of his agent's arrest, when he was himself hurried to prison. Aware of the address and art of the marchese, and anxious to procure the fullest evidence of his real character and crimes, the council first proceeded to the examination of Fabricio. The usual cunning of this man did not entirely forsake him in this dangerous dilemma; and no sooner was he brought before the tribunal than he voluntarily offered to make confessions of the utmost importance, provided his life should be spared, and declared that no species of punishment should *force* him to speak.

His judges, however, were by no means inclined to grant him the mercy he thus demanded, and were determined to find what effect the torture would produce upon him,

ere they should think of acceding to his wishes. Accordingly the unfortunate being was instantly ordered to the rack. The event justified the foresight of the inquisitors; for Fabricio, unable to endure even the commencement of his agonies, soon called aloud for mercy, and promised the most unreserved confession of his lord's crimes and his own. His punishment was then suspended; and as soon as he was in some degree recovered, he gave a circumstantial detail of every incident in which he had been engaged, from the period when the marchese first employed him as a spy upon the Mirandinis.

This confession completely removed the veil with which the marchese had hitherto concealed his enormities, and, together with Biondello's evidence, effectually established the innocence of the hapless friends, Udina and Mirandini, and, in short, explained to the inquisition every thing which they could desire to learn, except those circumstances in which Angelo Guicciardini was most particularly concerned, and inspired them with no slight belief in the identity of Orazio. Still, however, as Fabricio had declared that he was himself the murderer of the Count di Mirandini, it would be necessary to procure the most incontestible evidence that the count had escaped the fate assigned him, and had really resided in the Alpine solitude, in which he was said to have been secluded, ere the claims of Orazio for his supposed

birth-rights could be fully admitted. In their eagerness to punish the imposition which Rovenza had practised on the state, and in their zeal to evince their love of justice, by restoring the name of Udina to its former lustre, the council felt strongly inclined to offer to Angelo Guicciardini a full pardon for all the acts of violence committed by him and his banditti in the Venetian territories, if he would personally stand forward with efficient evidence of Orazio's identity; but, on consideration, this benevolent intention was rejected, lest the toleration of such a character might prove injurious, if not dangerous, to the state and to society in general. Much reflection, however, could not at this time be given to the subject; and it was determined first to proceed to the trial of the Marchese di Rovenza, and hold Orazio a prisoner, till some effectual means for securing Angelo could be devised.

The derangement which seized Rovenza at the sight of Biondello gave an effectual interruption to the proceedings commenced against him. During the continuance of his illness, which lasted several days, the council was again occupied in re-considering the justice of Orazio's claims, and in renewed examinations of himself and those friends whose interest in his fate had likewise subjected them to imprisonment. The arrival and examination of Father Ascollini also deeply engaged their attention; but from him

nothing that could serve Orazio was obtained. Indeed it was soon evident to the inquisitors that this man was so little acquainted with the history of Orazio, or the motives and actions of the Marchese di Rovenza, as well as so wholly ignorant of the Countess di Mirandini's real name and story, that his testimony was of no farther consequence than merely to confirm the circumstance of the marchese's former enquiries respecting Orazio, and his privately employing the father as a spy on the conduct of the supposed Signora di Berlotti, and the youth she had so strangely received into her cottage.

The intention of Rovenza to unite his daughter to Orazio was not considered by the council as any positive proof of the young man's identity, although it evinced that he had really at first either believed him to be his nephew, or that he had thought proper to appear to give credit to the story of his birth, in order to crush him afterwards the more effectually. Still, however, the most unfavourable circumstance against the injured youth was his connexion with the robber Angelo; and until the absolute nature of that connexion could be ascertained, and sufficient evidence of his having been really educated by the Count di Mirandini obtained, the council felt justified in withholding their final decision.

The Father Salvati, on being questioned relative to the recluse said to have lived

so long under the protection of the robber Angelo Guicciardini, had positively affirmed that he had never seen him, or heard any thing concerning him or Orazio, till the letters of the Count Ferbonino brought him to Venice, to give his evidence of the confession made by Velasquez Maretti; nor were the men who delivered up Biondello to the council better informed respecting the supposed Count di Mirandini.

On the day after the marchese's arrest, the council judged it expedient to summon the Marchesa di Rovenza to appear before the tribunal. The confession of Fabricio had evinced that she was entirely unacquainted with the crimes of her lord; but as she had been anonymously applied to on behalf of Orazio, previous to his being known to the marchese, and, from the testimony of Fabricio, appeared to have acted in some degree mysteriously on the occasion, it was deemed proper to demand an explanation of her motives and conduct.

At the moment of her receiving this summons, the marchesa was still confined to her chamber by severe indisposition; and it was not without running the risk of endangering her life that she was removed to the hall of the inquisition.

In this examination, frequently interrupted by her illness, and the violent emotions which she suffered, she gave a full detail of her long correspondence with the Countess di Mirandini, and thus established, beyond all doubt, the identity of that

lady. In all that related to Orazio, it was soon perceptible to the inquisition, that she knew no more than what had been already declared by the marchese, nor could she form the slightest suspicions respecting the writer of the anonymous epistles which had been addressed to her. The council, at length finding that the evidence of the marchesa, as far as related to Orazio and Angelo Guicciardini, was as much involved in mystery as that already collected from himself and his friend, permitted her to return to the pallazo.

Three days after the examination of the marchesa, a circumstance occurred which promised to decide the fate of Orazio. The event was the arrival of Monsieur d'Erville, the gentleman who had transacted the sale of the Count di Mirandini's estates, previous to the latter's retiring into the Alps.

This gentleman for some years had resided at Aleppo, and had there amassed a considerable fortune in mercantile concerns. He was at this period on his return to pass the evening of his days in his native country, and having occasion to visit Venice in his way, had taken his passage in a Turkish vessel bound for that port.

He had not been many hours in Venice, when the placards for the apprehension of Angelo Guicciardini, and which also contained the promise of the most liberal reward to any one who could give certain information respecting the late Count di Mirandini, or his lady, met his view, and,

in the agitation of the moment, he involuntarily uttered such expressions, as led some of the company to suspect him to be intimately informed respecting those persons. A merchant present, without troubling himself to ask the stranger any questions on the subject, followed him from the coffee-room, and soon after took an opportunity of giving him into the hands of one of the sbirri, to whom he briefly related his expressions, and they immediately hurried him to St. Mark's.

The terrified and amazed M. d'Erville almost immediately underwent a private examination before three of the elder inquisitors, and being commanded to declare all he knew respecting the persons mentioned in the placards, he confessed that he had formerly been particularly honored by the friendship of the Count di Mirandini, and then, as circumstantially as his consternation would permit, related the services he had rendered the Count, previous to his retiring from the Venetian territories, and as positively stated, that the child who had accompanied Mirandini in his short visit to Zurich, was mentioned to him as the orphan son of the unfortunate Count Costanza di Udina.

He was then asked, if he thought he could recollect the dress which the child wore at the period alluded to, and readily answered he thought he could, from a singular circumstance having occurred to the young Orazio while in his house.

On being desired to relate that circumstance, he said, " I had at the time a favourite dog of a large species, with which the young Udina was much delighted; and as the child was one day playing with the animal on the edge of a cliff which overhangs the river at the bottom of the garden, his foot slipped, and he must have fallen from the precipice, had not the dog, suddenly seizing him by the shoulder, prevented the accident. The teeth of the animal, however, wounded his shoulder, and his dress was torn; and I am rather inclined to believe that if the young Orazio be yet living, he still bears the scar of that wound."

Eager to avail themselves of the mean which this account suggested for ascertaining the truth of Orazio's identity, the inquisitors immediately directed that the dress should be shewn to M. d'Erville, who instantly recognized it as that worn by the child at the time, and pointed out the torn condition of the sleeve of the habit.

With unfeigned pleasure, the inquisitor, who had previously manifested no small interest for Orazio, then proposed that the youth should be ordered to appear, and that M. d'Erville should be allowed to view his shoulder, in order to ascertain whether he bore any scar answering that which the former supposed would remain after the wound.

This proposal was immediately acceded to, and Orazio was conducted into the

hall: M. d'Erville had been previously cautioned, however, not to declare his opinion, till after the youth should be ordered to retire.

When Orazio entered, he was desired to say whether he had any recollection of M. d'Erville. After a slight observation of that gentleman's face and figure, he replied in the negative. He was then ordered to expose his shoulder to the inspection of the stranger, a command which he had no sooner obeyed, than the looks of the former sufficiently convinced the council that he had, indeed, identified him.

On Orazio's being reconducted from the hall, M. d'Erville positively affirmed that the youth was the same Orazio di Udina whom, when a child, he had beheld under the protection of the good Count di Mirandini.

M. d'Erville was then asked, whether the Count di Mirandini had been in the habit of drawing on the Bank of Zurich for any part of the interest or principal of the sums he had deposited there.

"No," he replied, "those sums were placed there with a view of their accumulating for a certain number of years, and were intended, I believe, as a future provision for Orazio, whom the Count had declared he meant to make his heir."

M. d'Erville was then shewn the letter addressed by the Count di Mirandini to the Count Ferbonino. He instantly pronounced it to be the hand writing of his

noble friend, and said, "that although he had never learned what had become of the Count and his young ward after their quitting Zurich, he could not entertain the slightest doubt of the identity of Orazio.

After many more enquiries, the inquisition found that M. d'Erville knew nothing of the robber Angelo, than what he had learned from public report, and that he was utterly ignorant of every circumstance relative to the Mirandini family, after his parting with the Count. His testimony, however, was received as an unequivocal evidence of Orazio's identity, and the survival of the Count di Mirandini; and it now remained for the council only to decide whether they should redress the wrongs the house of Udini had sustained from their former erroneous decrees.

For the consideration of this just intention, a full assembly of the council was called on the following day, and before which M. d'Erville recapitulated the important evidence he had already given.

On his retiring, the chief inquisitor pronounced the evidence equally clear and satisfactory; and after some severe reflections on the dreadful crimes of Rovenza, and the misfortunes of the Udina family, generously intimated that, considering the peculiar circumstances of the young Orazio, and the extraordinary character of the robber Angelo Guicciardini, he could now scarcely doubt but that the latter had no further connection with the youth, than that

which arose from his well-known interference in the concerns of those, who, cruelly injured and oppressed, were destitute of other friends to undertake their cause.*

The other inquisitors acquiesced in those dictates of justice and clemency, which commanded that, as the memory of the much-wronged di Udina had been cleared from the odium which had so long disgraced his name, and as the identity of his son was clearly established, Orazio should immediately be put in possession of his birth-rights, and that the friends who had so nobly stood forward in his behalf, should be set at liberty. Nor was it intended in this decree to omit restoring the name of Mirandini to that honour which had been forfeited by the count's supposed share in the political crimes, so unjustly imputed to his unfortunate friend.

The following evening was appointed for the solemnity of formally acquitting Orazio of the charge on which he had been arrested, and of confirming his claims to the name, titles, and estates of the Udina family.

To render this act of the council at once a striking and memorable instance of justice and severity, it was also determined to pronounce the awful sentence merited by Rovenza, at the same moment which should restore to Orazio the noble inheritance of which he had been deprived.

CHAP. XII.

At the hour appointed all the members of the council of ten once more met in the hall of their tribunal, and the prisoners were immediately ordered to be brought in. The last who was conducted into the hall was Orazio.

Wholly unconscious of the intentions of the council in his favour, he, on his entrance, wildly started back, and displayed the utmost agitation at the scene which met his view.

This was the first time that he had beheld the council assembled with that awful solemnity, so truly calculated to impress the mind of the prisoner with timidity and dread. The hall, of vast extent, was hung around with black; the dresses of the inquisitors and their attendants, and the garments now worn by the prisoners, were all of the same mournful colour. The platform, occupied by the tribunal, was likewise covered with black, and ascended by three steps of black marble, while from the sable canopy above their heads depended three tripod lamps, the shadowy glare of which, partially falling on the stern countenances of the inquisitors, gave an undefinable expression to their forms and features, while the gloomy outline of the whole scene was dimly discoverable by

the light emitted from other lamps, thinly scattered on the black marble pillars that supported the dome.

With breathless horror and alarm Orazio, after a momentary glance towards the tribunal, fixed his fearful gaze upon his generous friends, the Count Ferbonino, Salvati, and M. d'Erville, who, ranged beneath the tribunal on the right hand, seemed struggling with emotions almost as violent as his own; while on the left appeared the gaunt form of Rovenza, whose pale and ghastly features, shrouded by his down cast looks, were scarcely discernible.

A death-like silence, broken only at intervals by the low questions of the judges, or the heart-piercing sighs of unfortunate prisoners, usually pervaded this dismal apartment; but now a more than customary stillness prevailed. Orazio observed with alarm, that the eyes of every member of the tribunal seemed fixed upon himself, with an austere and mysterious expression, which he now believed to be but the fatal fore-runner of the doom they were about to pronounce on himself and his friends.

After a pause of awful suspense, the principal inquisitor was about to speak, when Orazio, animated by that virtuous enthusiasm which, defying personal danger, trembles only for the safety of others, advanced towards the tribunal, and, in a voice which evinced all the agitation of his soul, exclaimed,

"Oh! hold!—In mercy hold, nor give utterance to the fearful sentence, which a prejudiced view of erroneous appearances may render just in your sight, till I have once more solemnly attested my own innocence, and the generous compassion and integrity of those whose pity for my misfortunes has made them sharers in my hapless destiny!"

"Mistaken youth," cried the chief inquisitor, interrupting Orazio, "Learn to respect the penetration and justice of that tribunal which, though once deceived by the most consummate hypocrisy that ever disgraced humanity, is no longer capable of similar errors, and which now evinces its eagerness to redress the wrongs of the injured, by thus speedily terminating your cause.—Convinced, by means which there is no occasion to reveal, of your father's honour and innocence, the name of Udina shall once more be surrounded with its former splendor, and while we solemnly acquit you of the charge on which you were arrested, we declare ourselves assured of the justice of your claims, and therefore invest you with the titles, wealth, and honours of your illustrious ancestors."

There is a climax of the feelings of which no description can convey an idea: such were now those of Orazio, as, motionless with excess of amazement, he stood inanimate as the sculptured marble.

From this apparent suspension of intellect, he was awakened by the sound of the

Count Ferbonino's voice, whose astonishment, nearly equalling his own, was yet mingled with such a transport of pleasure, as rendered him incapable of observing the silence requisite to be maintained in the court, and who now expressed the noble exultation of his heart in terms of animated gratitude to heaven.

Orazio, yet scarcely convinced that his senses had not been deceived by illusive sounds of promised happiness, turned a look of anxious doubt and enquiry on the count, and reading in his enlightened features an assurance of reality, quickly raised his eyes to the tribunal, and articulated,

"My friends!"

The intelligence of that upraised look more fully spoke his meaning than his words had done, and one of the inquisitors instantly replied,

"Your acquittal includes, of course, that of your friends."

It was now, that assured of the safety of those who had hazarded so much for him, Orazio yielded to the strong emotions of joy and gratitude which the unexpected and providentially happy reverse in his situation excited in his soul; but still his feelings were too powerful for utterance, and the broken accents which trembled on his lips were almost instantly interrupted by the deep groans of the wretched Rovenza, who, now fallen into the arms of some of the attendants, writhed

in all the agonies of disappointed malice, guilt and despair.

The generous youth, even in the moment of the most heart-felt triumph which virtue ever obtained over vice, compassionating the sufferings of a fallen enemy, glanced an eye of pity towards him, when suddenly the folding doors of the hall were thrown open, and a group of figures slowly entered, foremost of whom, and distinguished by the dauntless majesty of his form, more than by his striking habit, advanced Angelo Guicciardini.

The inquisitors involuntarily rose from their seats :—amazement, enquiry, and expectation, seemed to enchain the faculties of all within the hall ; and as the robber approached nearer to the tribunal, and his features became perceptible beneath the waving plume that ornamented his cap, the piercing glances of his full dark eyes seemed to strike awe and terror into the hearts of the shrinking gazers, till, as he suddenly encountered Orazio di Udina, his whole countenance underwent a change, and the visibly contending emotions of his mind gave an undefinable and varying expression to his looks and deportment, which, though not understood by his observers, yet by relieving them from the painful impression which his penetrating notice had occasioned them to experience, gave them a moment to recover themselves.

The emotion with which Angelo viewed Orazio, who seemed scarcely less affected than himself, was, however, but of short duration; and almost immediately resuming his former air, he once more turned towards the tribunal, and taking off his cap, evinced, by the most manly and graceful obeisance, the respect that he conceived due to the council.

It was at this moment, when the strikingly expressive countenance of Angelo was fully revealed—when the raven hair which curled on his open forehead, marked more forcibly the intelligent penetration and fire of his eyes, that Rovenza, as if animated by the spirit of frenzy to a degree of more than human energy, rushed forward, and with a cry, denoting the highest degree of savage malignity, wildly exclaimed—" Ha! changed as thou art, I know thee now, thou bandit outcast, and may the crimes of the robber Guicciardini hurl eternal infamy on the hated name of Udina, blasting for ever the fame of thy son, a son whose new-born honours shall wither in the dust, when all the gazing world shall hear, that in the bandit chief, Angelo Guicciardini, still exists Costanza di Udina!"

Mute astonishment and consternation seized the whole assembly, as Rovenza, with a fiend-like yell, proclaimed aloud the dreadful discovery he had made; while the robber, almost instantaneously recovering from the shock which he seemed to

feel at the commencement of Rovenza's words, shook off his viperous grasp, and dashed him on the marble pavement of the hall.

The amazement of the tribunal now broke forth into confused expressions, indistinct and unconnected; for so wholly was their attention still fixed on the bandit, that the general murmurs were incoherent, and unheeded by all but Angelo himself, who, with looks which betrayed all the internal emotion that agitated his frame, turned from the prostrate Rovenza, who lay writhing in convulsions at his feet, and fixed a steady but imploring gaze upon the members of the tribunal.

The chief inquisitor, whose judicial severity of manner concealed a heart not unsusceptible of the feelings of humanity, instantly understood the look of the robber, and, in a tone of voice indicative of the sympathy he felt, he uttered,

"Unfortunate father! in what a moment is the dreadful mystery, attendant on thy name, unravelled! Thou art then indeed Costanza di Udina!"

The robber did not reply:—the paleness of death overspread his features—his large dark eyes spoke all the inexpressible anguish of his heart, and the look of grief and horror which he now turned on Orazio, was the most unequivocal acknowledgment of his name.

The unfortunate youth, struggling with all the contending feelings to which the

reverses of his fate gave rise, now yielding to the impulses of honour and virtue, recoiled for one moment from the robber Angelo, and in the next, impelled by newly awakened emotions of filial affection and sympathetic sufferings, threw himself at the feet of his wretched parent, almost inaudibly exclaiming,

"My father! we will die together!"

The miserable Udina clasped him to his heart, and shed burning tears of sorrow and remorse on his uplifted brow: then wildly threw him from his embrace, and in loud accents, which seemed to shake the lofty dome, exclaimed,

"Away, unmanly boy! Shall justice once more slumber on her sacred throne, and the voice of prejudice condemn the innocent with the guilty? No, thou wilt live, live to bear the heavy burthen of unmerited ignominy, and hourly hate the memory of him who, driven from society by mistaken appearances, can now bequeath thee only woe and infamy. Accursed be the vengeful malice of the traitor's tongue, who has now revealed to thee thy father's existence, and his everlasting shame!"

Rovenza, who during this scene was gradually recovering from his fit, caught the full meaning of Udina's concluding sentence, and though unable to rise, he made a feeble effort to support himself on his own arm, and raising his hateful eyes towards the wretched father and son, hollowly articulated,

"No: rather blessed be the moment in which the justice of the hatred I bore thee is manifested, by the power bestowed upon me of recollecting thy detested features, and of crushing the haughty exultation of thy imperious son, by proclaiming to him his near relationship to a robber and a plunderer."

In the first impulse of his rage, Udina flashed a glance of indignant fury on his fallen foe; and then recoiling with contemptuous scorn, he said—

"The brutish cruelty of thy unmanly triumph, evincing all the abject meanness of thy nature, degrades thee beneath my further notice."

Then with a self-collected air he turned to address the tribunal, when the malevolent Rovenza attempted to commence another reviling taunt, and was instantly commanded to be borne out of the hall.

The removal of this being, so torturing to the sight of Udina, seemed to impart added animation to his mind, as, addressing the tribunal, he said—

"Fathers of the state, bribed by your promises of pardon and of high reward, a traitor belonging to my band has betrayed me into your power. As the robber Angelo I shall unrepiningly submit to the sentence awarded to the crimes of a bandit; but, as a man zealous in the cause of truth and justice, I claim the publication of my innocence of those imputed acts of disaffection and of murder that first

doomed me to the dreadful fate which I so unfortunately escaped only to meet, after years of miserable degradation, all the overwhelming horrors, all the anguish of an hour like this."

"Unhappy Udina!" said the principal state inquisitor, starting from the attitude of fixed attention with which he had for some time earnestly regarded the count, "learn to respect the rectitude of the council, and suppose not that the discovery that thou art still in existence, or the dreadful profession thou hast embraced, can prevent us from proclaiming thy former innocence to the world, or forbid our confirming to thy son his hereditary rights; but ere he can be set at liberty it must be proved that he really knew not of thy existence, nor was a sharer in his erring father's fearful course."

Udina did not immediately reply; the half-suppressed sighs of mental agony that burst from the lips of Orazio struck on his soul as the harrowing voice of accusing innocence, and for the first time his spirit was subdued to almost infant weakness. One great, one forcible effort restored him to himself, and with a solemn energy of manner, which added the most emphatic force to truth, he said—

"When in the fated hour that doomed me to destruction and disgrace, I first pronounced the tremendous oaths which invested me with all the dreadful privileges of a bandit chief, I had heard that even

my hapless children were proscribed their name and country, and that she whom my soul idolized, my never forgotten Veronica, was no more. I was then alone in the world, destined to wander over the face of creation, unknown, unfriended, and without a name. My sickening soul imbibed that misanthropic enmity towards mankind, which turns with disgust from the false colouring and perfidy of society in general, till rouzed from this torpor of the mind by keen reflections on the injustice of my fate, and fired by sympathetic feeling, as my busy fancy drew a vivid picture of the woes inflicted on the helpless of the human race by the unrelenting hands of oppression, malice, and self-interest, I burned to become in some degree the supporter of the injured innocence, the avenger of its wrongs, the scourge of the oppressor and the hypocrite. In the fervor of my heated imagination, I grasped at the power presented to my view, when as the commander of lawless and devoted bands, I could direct their every action to the accomplishment of my plan, and despoil the guilty sons of affluence, to comfort and sustain the suffering victims of poverty and oppression."

Udina paused: the wild enthusiasm which had added lightning to the fire of his quick glances, and majesty to his form, was now succeeded by the deep expression of agonizing recollection, and his voice trembled as he added—

"One month, one fleeting month, had passed from the period of my commencing this career, when I accidentally beheld Mirandini, the good, the noble hearted Mirandini, and my infant son. It was then that the keen shafts of shame and remorse first penetrated my soul. I shrunk in grief and horror from the anxiously enquiring looks of my friend, as, remarking my dress and manner, he tremulously uttered a conjecture of my real situation. But when I learnt that his fate was so awfully involved with my own; that he also stood alone and unconnected in the world; that all the fascinations of life, all the delights of love, were lost to him for ever, my regrets for the course of life I had embraced vanished, and I urged him to pursue the same. Exalted Mirandini! He listened to my arguments with all the patient observance of that firm friendship which, while it condemned, still compassionated those delusions of the mind; and at length he exerted all the energy of reason and persuasive entreaty to reclaim me from the career upon which I had entered.

"Alas! a life of resignation and obscurity—such a life as he then represented as best suited to my fallen state, I turned from with disgust. I had pictured to my mind the accomplishment of a thousand deeds of generosity and daring exploit; and I felt that the continuance of the enthusiastic intoxication of the imagination with which I was inspired was essential to my

existence. Too soon my friend perceived his arguments were vain: he desisted from them, but he did not desert me. One vow—one sacred, awful vow—was the seal of the compact of his generous sacrifice: that I would permit him to live secluded in the retirement he had chosen, and yield up my son to his uncontrouled direction, and never claim him as my own, unless I should forsake pursuits so inimical to the duties of a parent. Oh! with what heartfelt gratitude, what reverential respect, did I accede to these conditions!—conditions which till this dreadful hour I have never broken; for never till this hour did my poor Orazio know that in the robber Angelo Guicciardini he beheld his wretched father."

Udina paused. The mental conflict he suffered seemed to dew his manly brow with the chill damps of death: his eyes no longer darted the rays of enthusiastic animation, while the deepening flush forsook his pallid cheek, and his quivering lips seemed to gasp for more free respiration. He attempted to proceed; but his voice was now faltering, hollow, and inarticulate; and an universal tremor agitated his frame.

A change so sudden drew general attention. Orazio, who, while his hapless parent spoke, had stood with folded arms and downcast looks, the very semblance of despondent grief and deep humiliation, now started from his attitude of despair; but ere the alarmed and horror-stricken youth

advanced a step, Udina turned on him a look expressive of the deepest internal anguish; then, uttering a convulsive, lengthened sigh, staggered a few paces, and fell!

The utmost confusion was produced by this incident throughout the hall; and the exclamations, "He is dying! he is dead!" were general, till some of the inquisitors, who, in the first moments of alarm, had hastily descended from their tribunal, commanded the dispersion of the groups that had crowded around the prostrate form of Udina, now supported in the arms of his wretched son and the Count Ferbonino.

As the clamour of different voices subsided into whispered murmurs, one, more loud than the rest, was heard to demand the attention of the tribunal, and the harsh discordant tones it uttered, soon drew all eyes but those of Udina and Orazio on the speaker, who, advancing from the lower end of the hall, discovered by his uniform habit that he was one of Angelo's band.

The appearance of this man—his robust athletic form, and dark scowling countenance, were equally striking and repulsive. With a glance of careless assurance he addressed the principal inquisitor, and pointing towards Udina, said—

"The death of my chief will not absolve the council from the fulfilment of the promises by which I was led to deliver him into its hands. I have secured my own safety; saved him from the fate

which no brave man should suffer, and I will now do him the last service I can render him."

The words of this man seemed to strike on the soul of Udina with an electrical fire. Almost starting up from the marble pavement on which he partly rested, one gleam of bright intelligence again illumined his eyes, and, in wild emotion, he exclaimed,

"The wine, Borachio!——"

"'Twas poison," he emphatically replied, "and the world could not now save you." Udina, with a faint smile of triumphant satisfaction, which, however, was instantaneously succeeded by a despairing and a horrid glance on his son, again sunk his head on the shoulder of Orazio, while several of the inquisitors repeated, in tones of angry amazement, the word "Poison!"

Borachio turned with an unmoved countenance, and coolly said,

"Though I followed the first law of nature—self-preservation, in availing myself of the offers of pardon and reward which you held out for the apprehension of our captain, I had not the heart to think of giving him up to the rack and the scaffold. Besides, as he had more confidence in me than in all the rest of his men put together, it would not have been fair or manly to serve him such a cowardly trick without helping him out at last."

One of the enraged inquisitors now commanded Borachio to be silent, and

then addressing the dying Udina, he said,

"You were then ignorant of the device of this wretch?"

This question was, however, twice repeated ere the unfortunate Costanza was sensible that it was addressed to himself. At length he faintly replied,

"At the moment I swallowed the fatal draught I had no suspicion of its nature:—From the symptoms which first attacked me a few days back, I had some slight idea of the kind; but, in my situation, it was impossible for me to feel alarm or regret."

This was spoken with the utmost difficulty, and was succeeded by so deathlike a faintness, that little doubt could be entertained that Udina was fast closing the period of his earthly existence.

To describe the feelings of the miserable Orazio on the mournful occasion would be impossible. Every one present appeared to partake in some degree his unhappiness, till Borachio, after a considerable pause, said,

"This is only a torpid paroxysm.—In a few minutes he will recover sufficiently to answer any slight questions which may be proposed to him; but it would be better to let his brave and noble spirit depart in peace; for he can tell nothing more than I can say for him."

This assertion instantly commanded the earnest attention of all the members of the

tribunal, and the chief inquisitor was on the point of directing him to explain himself more fully, when Udina once more re-opened his languid eyes, and by his returning sensibility evinced the truth of Borachio's words.

The only object which now seemed to engage his thoughts was his son, who, pale as his dying father, still gazed upon his altered features, with wild, distracted looks, and sustained him with all that unconsciousness of personal pain or inconvenience, which a mind occupied by the deepest interest and sorrow can alone give.

In accents tremulous and affecting, but more audible than when he had last spoken, this miserable parent had just articulated the name of Orazio, when one of the inquisitors, with a degree of haste which displayed more of judicial anxiety than feeling, cried,

"Costanza di Udina, while Heaven permits you a transient possession of your intellectual faculties, remember that your duty to the state, and regard to your son's interest, equally command you to employ your remaining moments in such confessions as can best atone for the crimes you have committed, and the injuries with which you have now overwhelmed your unhappy offspring."

Could the glance with which Orazio repaid the unfeeling address have possessed the lightning's power, instantly would the icy-hearted being who uttered it have

suffered death for his cruelty. A groan, deep and agonizing, was the only reply of Udina, till the heart-fraught expressions of consoling tenderness which trembled on the lips of his son, restored him to some degree of composure and recollection, when, after sighing forth a blessing, which he durst not pronounce aloud, on his beloved Orazio, he made an effort to raise his head, and while his dim eyes were again directed towards the tribunal, he feebly uttered, "The confessions which are required by the council are no longer in my power to pronounce.—When I am no more, a circumstantial detail of my life will be laid before the state.—With the sincerity of a sinner on the confines of eternity, I call upon Heaven to witness the unequivocal, and undisguised truth of the narrative to which I allude.—It will bring conviction to your minds, fathers, that my son is worthy of the distinguished indulgence and justice which you have evinced in his cause.—Oh! may his afflictions cease with the hour that consigns me to the oblivion of the grave; and ——"

The chief state inquisitor, urged by his consideration of the importance of every passing moment of Udina's lingering existence, now gently interrupted him, to learn in whose hands the promised history of his life was placed.

"It is in the possession of the Countess di Mirandini, who, with her daughter, is now resident in the Convent of Santa

Clara, in the Cadorino," sighed Udina, while the rising emotion which Orazio experienced at this information respecting his adored Cecilia was instantly repressed by his perceiving the features of his father violently convulsed.

"There!" exclaimed Borachio, also noticing the change. "He has but a few moments to live, and it is useless to torment him with questions which he cannot answer."

The daring boldness of this remark was instantly reproved with extreme severity by one of the inquisitors, who added a threat of capital punishment for the murder of Udina.

Borachio muttered in return—"The proclamation did not particularise whether Angelo was to be delivered up alive or dead, and therefore the deed I have committed cannot affect my life.—But should the case be otherwise, I have it in my power to withhold the information I mentioned, nor shall all the racks and gibbets in Venice terrify me to speak more than I think proper."

Again he was commanded to be silent, and to withdraw from the tribunal till his presence should be required; a command which he now obeyed, and retired a few paces, while the unfortunate victim of his treachery again displayed signs of reviving sensibility. It was the last effort of expiring nature, and in these few moments the mind of this extraordinary man

became once more animated with all that enthusiastic feeling which had characterized him through his eventful life. The wonted spirit and intelligence of his speaking eyes returned, and a degree of temporary strength revisited his nerveless limbs, as attempting to rise, he withdrew for a moment his anxious gaze from the agonized countenance of his son, and looked around on the friends who formed the melancholy group beside him. The good Father Salvati was the first that met his eager glance, and he, without requiring the permission of the tribunal, instantly advanced nearer, to offer to the dying penitent those consolations which inspire the christian with the hope of acceptance in a better world.

Udina gazed upon him for a moment, with the look of one who fancies an angelic being hovers over the couch of death, to smooth the terrors of the momentous hour of dissolution;—a brighter ray of sensibility beamed from his expressive eyes, and in a voice, changed indeed from its former tone, but not less affecting and impressive, he articulated,

"Father, the approach of such a man as thou art, must ever speak pardon and peace to those repenting of crimes and errors, which at so awful a moment are viewed stripped of all their illusive colouring.—It has been the strange contrariety of my disposition to suffer my principles and actions to appear at variance; for

while, with cherished reverence, I secretly bowed before the holy altars of religion, my course of life seemed repugnant to every sacred obligation."—He paused a moment. Then grasping more firmly the hand of Orazio, fixed on him a look of poignant grief and parental affection, and in a faltering tone continued—" Oh! my son! in thy unceasing remembrance of this awful hour, while hereafter writhing beneath the agonizing pangs inflicted by the consciousness of blighted *fame* and *honour*, thou wilt learn the indelible lesson that patient submission to the inscrutible decrees of Heaven can alone ensure the possession of that peace and wisdom which is 'above the price of rubies.'—In all the arrogance of human reason, man feels *himself* the arbiter of his own destiny, and madly grasps, as the means of attaining that happiness to which his presumptuous heart aspires, every illusion which prejudice or passion offers to his view, till sad experience proves the insufficiency of nature as his guide, and the imperfection of all sublunary enjoyments.—Think not that I argue thus to reconcile thee to the evils with which my conduct has environed thee—No,—to the latest moment of thy existence, I would have thee sensible that they are great and lamentable, but I wou'd have thee also feel that they are the awful consequences of that desponding desperation, which, forsaking dependence on that glorious and eternal power who is

the only certain refuge of injured innocence, the unfailing chastiser of guilt, seeks, when latent sensibility is rouzed, in the errors of an enthusiastic imagination, that support which can alone proceed from Heaven.—The closing scene of my eventful life impressively evinces that just intentions cannot sanction the use of improper means for the accomplishment of good. The widow's and the orphan's grateful hearts have blessed me, and affluent oppressors trembled at my name; yet the infringement of those laws, wisely established for the general welfare of society, subjects me to the just condemnation of all good men, and for ever obscures the lustre of my house, even in the moment when the unerring justice of Heaven had restored it to its former dignity." Overwhelmed by this torturing reflection, and exhausted by his lengthened exhortation to his son, Udina once more paused, till the awful conviction that in a few minutes more the silence of death would rest upon his pallid lips revived him to a last exertion; when, raising his now languid eyes towards the tribunal, he added,

"The history of my life will prove to the state that, amidst all my deplorable errors, I have not been forgetful of my country, nor insensible to her dearest interests.—For my son I claim only that equity which the most rigid justice might afford him, for he is innocent.—Of thy earthly honours, my Orazio, thou art de-

spoiled by the crime of Angelo Guicciardini.—May the misfortunes and errors of Udina instruct thee in the intrinsic value of those meek and pious virtues which can adorn with dazzling brilliance the exaltation of the throne, and shed the mild irradiations of peace and contentment on the lowly abodes of obscure adversity!"

A spasmodic pang, which convulsed his whole form, now checked the utterance of Udina:—the chilling damps of death rose on his brow—a nerveless listlessness pervaded his limbs—his dim eyes no longer distinguished objects, and faintly sighing the name of Orazio, he essayed to pronounce a blessing on his son, and breathed forth the last spark of life in this paternal benediction.

A solemn pause, marked only by the sighs of the good Salvati and the Count Ferbonino, ensued, while Orazio, kneeling beside the lifeless form of his unfortunate parent, remained in speechless agony of soul, till the approach of some of the officers to remove the body awakened the miserable youth to the full perception of the overwhelming anguish of his feelings.

The assembly was now immediately dissolved. In vain were the entreaties of Orazio to be permitted to accompany and remain with the corpse for a short time. In a state of mind which defies description, he was re-conducted to his cell, after having been informed, that he must continue a prisoner until the council should

decide on the veracity of the narrative of his father's life.

CHAP. XIII.

The first order of the council, on quitting the hall of justice, was an immediate summons to the Countess di Mirandini and her daughter, and proper officers were dispatched to conduct them with all possible speed to Venice. Their next concern was the disposal of the corpse of the late unfortunate Count di Udina; the interment of which they at length determined to suspend, till they should be enabled to judge, from a perusal of his history, how far the state should be justified in pronouncing his remains unworthy the respect to which his original rank and former virtues entitled him.

Conscious that the misfortunes and crimes of Udina's life had been the fatal effects of that erroneous decree which had sentenced him to an ignominious death, and his children to banishment and proscription, and unfeignedly desirous to repair in some measure the calamitous consequences of that mistake, the council was generally anxious to develope the mysterious circumstance of his escape from the fate to which they had formerly doomed him, and to discover any incidents in his life which might prove so favourable to his memory,

as to afford them an opportunity of restoring the young Orazio to liberty and fortune. To have discovered Costanza di Udina in the far-famed robber Guicciardini was an incident as astonishing as unexpected; and his singular and sudden death was not less a severe disappointment, than a cause of indignation against the Bandit Borachio, who, the day following, underwent a most rigid examination. The account which this man then gave of himself, and his connection with Angelo Guicciardini, was as follows, and, as he had previously declared, afforded no unimportant information to the inquisitors, and as his narrative was brief, it will be best related in his own words.

"At the time of the young Count Costanza's return from the army in which he was so severely wounded, I was a common gondolier, but I had a mind by no means suited to the sameness of my employment. Want of an opportunity of exchanging it for some occupation better adapted to the vigour and activity of my disposition, compelled me, however, to endeavour to be as contented as I could. At the period to which I allude, all Venice rang with the praises of their young hero; and I was among the most zealous of his admirers, and soon conceived the idea of enlisting in the regiment which he commanded, and of accompanying him on his return to Turkey, should he recover of his wounds. The misfortunes which at length fell so

heavy on the noble family of Udina disappointed all my new-formed hopes, and I once again resigned myself to patience and my oar; till, three or four years afterwards, the sudden arrest of the unfortunate Costanza renewed all the interest I had felt for him, and gave me the greatest concern for his fate.

"Here, however, the matter must have rested, if I had not had a brother who was at that time a servant in the prisons of the inquisition, and whose office it was to furnish the prisoners with their daily food. Poor Basilio! he did not much relish his employment, and soon found means of relieving the melancholy into which it threw him, by sometimes venting his troubles to me, when, of a dark night, he could steal for a few moments to a little grating in one of the passages of the dungeons, and which is nearly level with the canal. Beneath this grating I and my fellow gondolier have often waited for hours for the chance of hearing some of Basilio's dismal tales. It may now be supposed that when I was so much concerned for the fate of my favourite hero, I did not miss the first opportunity of seeing Basilio, and from him I learnt as much of the proceedings of the council as he was acquainted with. In short, I heard that the count was condemned, after having experienced all the dreadful varieties of the torture, and would soon terminate his wretched existence in the Lagoon. The

violence of my indignation and distress on this occasion inspired me, I believe, with the strange and extravagant idea of saving the wretched Udina, and I found a most zealous coadjutor in my brother, to whom I had secretly communicated my wish. I knew I should risk my life in this adventure, but that life while passed in the occupation of a waterman had few charms for me. My companion at the oar had as great a dislike to the business as myself, and partaking all my enthusiasm for the brave Constanza, soon agreed to be a sharer in my perils —Suffice it to say, we were diligently on the watch. Basilio had told us at what hour the fatal boat would come to fetch the prisoner, and as if Heaven approved our plan, the night was uncommonly dark, and rather tempestuous. Under the cover of this clouded sky we waited with our little gondola close to the first arch of the bridge, and about midnight beheld the distant glimmering of the lantern, affixed to the head of the boat designed to conduct the prisoner to his watery grave.

Soon we perceived the light stationary, and the signal of the boat's arrival sounded dismally in the loud gust of wind which swept along the canal. At length the door opened, and by the light from within, we had an imperfect view of the pale and bending figure of the prisoner slowly advance, and step into the boat, which now immediately put off. With all the caution necessary, I and my companion plied our

oars and followed: we had no light, that in the boat of death was a sufficient guide. When we reached the wide expanse of the Lagoon the wind encreased, and the rain began to pour down in torrents: still we pursued our course, till the foremost boat rested upon its oars in that dreadful part where so many have met the doom attendant on their crimes. A loud and sudden dashing of the water informed us that the miserable Costanza had just been precipitated into the Lagoon; in the next moment the boat moved swiftly on its return. It was in this moment that we became sensible of all the hazard and absurdity of our plan. It is true, the prisoner had been informed by Basilio of our design, and of the signal we intended to make, but the swell of the water, and the noise of the rain and wind, combined to throw us into dismay. I knew he could swim admirably, and, though now despairing of succeeding in saving him, we made the signal by placing a light, half shaded, on the prow of the gondola. —What was our surprise and joy when, in a few minutes, we heard a voice near the side of the boat—we threw out a rope, it was instantly caught, and in two or three seconds, we assisted the nearly exhausted Costanza into the gondola. This was a circumstance so very extraordinary, that it was impossible not to see the hand of heaven in its accomplishment; and under that conviction, I believe, I was at the moment a better man than I had ever been before

or since. In the gondola we were provided with some good wine, and a safe disguise for the object of our concern; and having extinguished the signal light, we still rested on our oars, and after making him swallow a cupful, begged him to change his dress as quick as possible, which he instantly did, and we threw his clothes, in which we had tied up a few heavy stones, into the Lagoon.

The disguise was simple, that of a Morisco; and we had not forgotten a composition for him to use in the alteration of his complexion. His dark curling hair was concealed under his turban; and when, after no small difficulty, we reached the northern shore of the Trevisans, and ventured to land and strike a light, we were ourselves convinced that thus metamorphosed, he could never be discovered.

For the first time, we now permitted him to speak, and after expressing the gratitude and astonishment which our conduct excited, he demanded the motive of our extraordinary humanity. We had some motive, it is true, but we refused to explain it till he should reach the place to which we would conduct him. He submitted to this, and then made an earnest enquiry for his lady and his children. We again refused to answer any questions till we should reach the place of our destination, and without further conversation, I returned to the gondola, pierced a hole in the side, and setting it adrift, soon saw it

foundering, when I immediately ran back to the little rocky recess, where I had left the count and my companion. Here, by my direction, we all exchanged our habits for those of monks on a pilgrimage, and buried the first dress in the earth. The count asked no further questions. He was absorbed in his own feelings, and gave himself up entirely to our guidance.

"As soon as we were equipped we set out, all alike prepared with a plausible tale, and by the evening reached a retired village, where we passed the night. Neither myself nor my companion were in any alarm from the apprehension of discovery, as we thought our adventure far too extraordinary ever to be suspected. The count, whose surprise increased every moment as he viewed our tranquillity, ventured again to beg an explanation, and although we would give none, we perceived that our courage inspired him with hope—a hope that enabled him to bear the fatigues of our pedestrian journey, which, however, ceased on his part on the second day, when we purchased him a mule, and in this manner travelled till we arrived at the Mount St. Gothard, in one of the most dismal recesses of which is a cavern, then possessed by a few brave fellows who were Venetians like ourselves, but having been illtreated by their countrymen, were resolved to be independent men, and only wanted a proper leader."

One of the inquisitors here interrupted

Borachio, with an exclamation of amazement, at the extravagant idea of saving the life of one of the most honorable noblemen of Venice, to induce him to become the captain of a party of baditti.

Borachio, with a sarcastic smile, replied:—

"But this nobleman was then no longer honorable; and extravagant as the plan may seem, the result proved the truth of the calculation I had made. Though a common gondolier I had some intellect; I took care to improve it. From books, and observations on men, I had made a tolerably just estimate of the failings of mankind, and I believe that no person was more likely to enter on such a course than one, who from an exalted rank had fallen into the lowest ignominy and contempt. In the first moments of my conceiving the idea of saving the life of the count, it never occurred to me how I should afterwards dispose of him, but when I recollected that he was despoiled of name and fortune--his children proscribed—his wife insane—his friend, the good Count di Mirandini, obliged to fly for fear of sharing his fate, I perceived that he must be provided with some retreat. This dilemma seemed to threaten the compleat overthrow of all my good intentions towards him. I had neither money nor interest, and destitute of both, it was not difficult to perceive how little good could be produced by my hazarding my own life to preserve

that of the count. I had some thoughts of applying to the Marchesa di Rovenza, and of entrusting her with my design, but when I reflected that although she was a good woman, she might nevertheless be also a very weak one, I was afraid that she might betray my plan to her lord, of whom I did not think quite so well as the world did, and therefore I apprehended that he might not be extremely well pleased on the occasion; of course I dropped all idea of this step, and had nearly given up all hopes of preserving the count, when, on my lamenting this necessity to poor Vincentio, my fellow gondelier, he, with some hesitation, said he knew where the count could be secure, and probably remain unknown for years, if he would accept of such an asylum, and take care not to be discovered; but before Vincentio would fully explain himself, he bound me to secrecy by as many oaths as a penitent would make vows of reform, and then, with some circumlocution, revealed to me that a band of courageous fellows, who had lost every thing but their spirit, was then forming in the Mount St. Gothard, and he doubted not but they would receive the count and ourselves with alacrity and joy. In short, he drew such a picture of their independent lives, that I soon became ardently anxious to exchange my droning, fatiguing occupation for the same daring and active pursuits. As soon as Vincentio

had perceived me to be thoroughly resolved, he told me that he would now arrange matters so as to procure the money we wanted and prepare our friends, so he already termed them, to receive us favorably. By what means this was effected, I am ignorant of even to this hour; but it is certain that the band had some secret friend in Venice who supplied Vincentio with the money we wanted. Thus, by a singular combination of occurrences, was the destiny of the injured Count di Udina decided. I have already related how our escape and journey were accomplished, but I know not how to describe the consternation and despair of the brave unfortunate when he found himself, at the termination of our travels, in a cavern, the secure haunt of a set of voluntary outlaws, who received him, indeed, with the most vociferous and sincere professions of friendship.

"A full and candid explanation was then given him by myself, and while he could not avoid expressing the gratitude he felt for our mistaken kindness, it was perceivable that the wild eccentricity of the whole plan, its extraordinary success, and its termination, filled him with amazement. With the firmest resolution, however, he declined all partnership in our pursuits, but at the same time declared, that he fully confided in the protection and concealment offered him, and of which, he said, he must avail himself for a time. He

then once more besought me to give him all the intelligence I could respecting his family.

"This was the crisis of his fate. I related to him the disastrous events which had attended his wife, his children, and his best friends, perhaps in exaggerated terms, and possibly my hope of ultimately inducing him to become the leader of our society impelled me to colour the picture too highly; but the circumstances I related were undeniable truths, and they penetrated the heart of Udina with the deepest anguish and despair. From that moment he sunk into the lethargy of despondent grief. This I knew to be a state of mind unnatural to his animated character, and I rightly augured that it would soon be succeeded by all the enthusiastic desperation which dispositions of uncommon energy at length generally rush into when their dearest hopes are lost to them for ever. The event justified my supposition, and in less than six weeks after our arrival at the cavern, the afflicted, despairing Udina, was converted into the daring bandit chief, Angelo Guicciardini.

"Before, however, he would take the customary oaths, he declared to the society the only conditions on which he would become their leader.—There are no men so thoroughly depraved as to love vice because it is vice; and certainly it must proceed from some innate propensity to virtue that even the greatest villains endeavour to

throw the veil of plausible pretexts over their very worst actions. Although virtue may be spoken of by them as a mere chimera, it is nevertheless certain that it is ever an unconscious respect for the good qualities which they affect to despise, that renders mankind in general so apt to use the gloss of hypocrisy, in order to conceal the hideous aspect of vice.—The number of which our band then consisted was fifteen. There were few of us but secretly laughed at the idea of a gang of banditti setting up for the chivalrous defenders of innocence and virtue, and the self-elected judges and punishers of guilt. But the plausibility of such a design was agreeable to us all, as it offered a specious excuse for our pursuits; and, accordingly Udina met with the most animated approbation for what was termed his "great and noble views."—Yet, how little does man understand the different impulses to which his heart is liable, and how seldom does he acknowledge the influences of example on his principles and actions.—No sooner had Udina commenced his career, than he evinced how powerful is the domination which great minds acquire over those of inferior talents. The laws which he framed for the observance of the band were rigidly observed:—his slightest glance enforced obedience;—his word was a decree, and his undeviating performance of his own duty effectually secured him the submission which was paid to his authority. Not one act of cruelty or in-

justice was ever committed with his sanction or by his command;—not the chance traveller, nor the abode of the industrious and hospitable, were the objects of our attacks;—the proud and opulent oppressor, the selfish hypocrite,—the designing deceiver.—Such were the characters that it was the glory of Angelo Guicciardini to despoil of that wealth, which but too well enabled them to commit with impunity such acts as would have doomed a poor villain to the gibbet.—But this is an almost useless digression," continued Borachio, after a slight pause. "The character of Angelo Guicciardini will be best developed by the circumstantial memorial of his actions which will be soon submitted to the inspection of the council. I shall therefore proceed with a brief relation of those events which are most materially connected with the important subjects under the inspection of the inquisition.—Angelo had been but one month commander of our band, when, as I headed a few men on the look-out for a sly abbot who loved good eating better than praying, and good liquor better than penance, we suddenly perceived a solitary figure issuing from amidst a clump of stunted firs. It was the Count di Mirandini.—I instantly recognized him, and without asking him any questions, left half a dozen stout-hearted fellows to continue on the look-out for our abbot, and, with the others, conducted the Count to the cavern, where our chief was

then occupied in giving directions to the remainder of our band. I need not describe this meeting. Angelo himself has informed the council how he felt on this occasion, and I could not do justice to the looks and arguments of these unfortunate friends. Suffice it, that when the generous-hearted Mirandini found he could not prevail on our chief to give up his profession for a life of inactive grief, he swore not to leave him, on condition that he would yield up his son to his sole direction, and never claim him, unless he should quit the band. Udina assented to this condition, and sealed the engagement with a vow, which, indeed, he never broke.—Consoled by the occasional interviews which he had with the Count di Mirandini, whenever our band happened to be stationed in the Mount St. Gothard, which was our grand place of rendezvous, Udina seldom beheld his son till he was ten years of age. At this period, this unhappy parent began to train the boy to martial exercises, and while the young Orazio received his lessons with that adventurous spirit, and ready comprehension which so soon rendered him a proficient in the art of war, never did he once suspect that his instructor was his father. Believing that this brave man followed the occupation of a hunter, and that severe misfortune had driven him from society, Orazio both loved and respected him, and often begged to be a sharer in his toils ; but this Angelo resolutely refused, and therefore seldom

visited the residence of Mirandini when his son had attained that knowledge of arms which he wished him to acquire.— But the kind of education which this youth received, both from the Count di Mirandini and his unknown father, has doubtless been already revealed to the council."

Borachio paused, but was immediately ordered not to omit the slightest incident relative to the education of Orazio.

The bandit obeyed, and his account perfectly corresponded with that already given.

"Thus," he continued, "Orazio acquired from the Count di Mirandini all the erudition and accomplishments which he possesses, while from his father he learnt at intervals the military knowledge for which he is distinguished."

Borachio was now asked, whether the band was acquainted with Orazio's relationship to their chief. He replied, "Not one of the members of our society was acquainted with that circumstance; nor did they suspect that the "Recluse of the tower," so was he called, was the Count di Mirandini. Angelo seldom visited them, and when he did, it was with caution. Every article of luxury or comfort, with which this solitary residence was furnished, was conveyed thither, indeed, by our band; but, as this was considered as a mere act of benevolence to the supposed hermit and his son, it did not excite either attention or suspicion. Angelo was too

liberal for the band to imagine that he had any other motive for serving the recluse than that of humanity."

"What were Udina's views respecting the future destination of his son?" demanded one of the inquisitors.

"He meant to make him a soldier of fortune, and had long decided that when he was eighteen years of age, he should for ever quit the Alps, and enter the army of Venice."

"Did he then never mean to reveal his relationship to him?"

"Never.—No longer possessing exalted rank, and an unsullied name, to bequeath to his posterity, he chose rather that his son should remain unacquainted with his illustrious birth, than damp the ardour of his rising youth with the knowledge of those misfortunes which had deprived him of country and honour."

"The confession made by Velasquez Maretti, doubtless, altered this intention," observed one of the inquisitors.

"In part, it certainly did," replied Borachio; "Angelo then determined that his son should be informed of his real origin, but still persisted in his resolve of never making himself known to him. This event, however, produced a deep and melancholy effect on the mind of our leader, who, from the moment he discovered that there existed a probability of clearing his innocence of those crimes, for which he was supposed to have suffered, never ceased to

lament, in secret, his entrance into our band as the greatest misfortune of his life. This, however, he was careful to conceal from his men, and to the Count di Mirandini and myself did he alone confess his affliction on the subject. From yielding too much to his feelings, he was, however, in some measure saved by the necessity of exerting himself in planning some method of rendering the confession of Velasquez the means of restoring the ancient honours of his name, and the wealthy possessions of his house to his son. In his first consultation with his friend Mirandini on this subject, he expressed a wish of immediately applying to his cousin, the Marchese di Rovenza, who, he doubted not, would readily exert every possible means for the establishment of his innocence and the restoration of the fortunes of his son. From this attempt he was fortunately dissuaded by his friend, who never could share in the highly favourable opinion which Udina still entertained of his treacherous and cruel relative, whom he did not in the least suspect to have been the contriver and author of his former sufferings. At length it was agreed that Mirandini should address the Count Ferbonino on the occasion: the purport of that letter, and the events which ensued, are, I believe, already well known to the council."

This observation was of little avail to Borachio, who was once more commanded

to proceed without the least omission in his narrative.

"The death of the Count di Mirandini soon followed the dispatch of this letter, and Angelo was himself obliged to proceed *incognito* to Locarno, where he expected either to meet Count Ferbonino, or to find a letter from him. In this expedition I alone accompanied him." Borachio then proceeded to relate the circumstance of Angelo's receiving the expected letter, and his accidental discovery of the Countess di Mirandini, in the cavern of the cottage. "This event," he continued, "as singular as astonishing, filled the mind of our brave leader with mingled sensations of regret and satisfaction; and while he keenly lamented that this discovery had not taken place previous to the death of the Count di Mirandini, he yet rejoiced in the opportunity of evincing to the wife and daughter of that generous friend, all the grateful veneration which he bore his memory."

"The Countess di Mirandini, as soon as she understood that her husband had thought proper to entertain a serious friendship for the robber Angelo, related to him the whole history of her life; but with no particulars of that life have I been made acquainted, except that she had a dreadful enemy in the German Count de Weilburgh: but more of this in its place. The important interests of his son more immediately engaged Udina at this time, and the moment he received the letter from the

Count Ferbonino, stating the time when he intended to be at Sesto, we instantly set off on our return to the Alps, to inform the young Orazio of the favorable prospects which awaited him, and to prepare him to meet the Count Ferbonino at the place appointed.

"The alarm and dismay of Angelo may easily be imagined, when he discovered that the youth had fled from his home but the day preceding that of our return. Selecting a few of our men, who were best qualified for the undertaking, our brave captain immediately set out in pursuit of his son, and we fortunately overtook him, but not for some days. I believe, the council is already acquainted that the young Udina was prevailed upon to introduce himself at the cottage of the supposed Signora di Berlotti, and that by this introduction Angelo meant not only to effect in future a union between his son and the young Cecilia di Mirandini, but also to create a deeper interest in the mind of the good Count Ferbonino when he should behold Orazio beneath the roof of the long-lost wife of his regretted friend. This, in fact, happened just as he wished. Two days after the youth was received into the cottage, the Count Ferbonino arrived at Sesto, and had a private interview with Angelo Guicciardini, whom, on the high recommendation of the Count di Mirandini, he condescended to treat with considerable indulgence and some degree of respect; while

he scrupled not to express his regrets that such a man should devote himself to a course of life, which rendered him an alien from all the joys of social and civilized life. Our leader was sufficiently disgusted with his rude profession previous to this interview, but the lamentations of the Count Ferbonino effectually fixed him in the resolve of quitting it as soon as his son's fortunes should be decided, when he would immediately have retired into some secluded and penitential monastery for the remainder of his days. This intention he entrusted to me, and I had too much discernment not to perceive that he was, indeed, lost for ever to our band, and therefore I did not attempt to use any arguments against his design.

"But to return to his interview with the Count Ferbonino. The latter heard of the singular discovery of the Countess di Mirandini's being still in existence with the most unfeigned satisfaction, and highly approved Angelo's introduction of Orazio to that lady, whom the count was now impatient to behold, for he did not in the least doubt the veracity of his informer, who, at the same time that he related the story of the countess, gave into his hands a casket of jewels, once belonging to his beloved Veronica, and which the Count di Mirandini, in his haste to escape at the time he dreaded being seized at his Paduan villa, had taken away in mistake. These Angelo requested the Count Ferbonino to

present to the young Cecilia, which the latter accordingly did on his second visit. I believe I must repeat that, on arriving at the cottage of the Signora di Berlotti, the count found that Orazio had accepted of accommodations at the priory of San Ambrose, and after a private interview with the countess, in which he earnestly assured her of his friendship, he proceeded to the priory, where he no sooner beheld Orazio than he felt convinced of his identity, from the strong resemblance which he bore to his unfortunate father at the same period of life. I presume that the council already knows, that on the day following this interview, the Count Ferbonino dined at the cottage of the signora, in company with Orazio and the father Ascollini, and there renewed his promises of service to the former. On quitting the cottage, the count had another interview with Angelo, when the final arrangement respecting the future proceedings in Orazio's favour was concluded; and it was also settled that, as some time must elapse ere Biondello could be found, and the route of the Father Salvati into Spain could be traced, a commission in the Venetian army should be procured for the youth, that he might there have an opportunity of acquiring some other friends by the display of his military talents and excellent qualities, and be thus enabled to appear before the state in a more favourable point of view.

"The Count Ferbonino now, indeed, proved himself a friend well qualified to be entrusted with the execution of an intricate and important affair; for no sooner did he learn that Biondello di Balvo had been seen at Milan, than he declared his resolve of proceeding thither himself in quest of this man, whose arrest would be of so material consequence to the interests of Orazio; and having promised to send proper agents to Spain in search of the Father Salvati, he took leave of Angelo, and returned to Venice, to exert himself in procuring the promised commission for the youth, and to arrange matters for his own intended journey in search of Biondello.

"On the departure of the count, Angelo and myself immediately set off on our return to the castle of the Mount St. Gothard, in order to give instructions for the observance of the band during our future absence. A certain number of the men were directed to hold themselves in readiness to attend their leader at a moment's notice; it being the intention of Angelo to remove the Countess di Mirandini and her daughter from the cottage immediately on Orazio's departure to join the Count Ferbonino; the latter had promised to require him to meet him at as soon as every thing was ready for his introduction to the army; the count himself intending personally to present him to his regiment."

One of the inquisitors then asked what was Angelo's motive for wishing to remove the countess and her daughter from the cottage?

"Because he dreaded that the German Count de Weilburgh, who, he had heard, was then in Venice, might by some chance discover her retreat, and renew his persecution of that lady. He was therefore desirous of securing her, till he should be at liberty to investigate by what right that nobleman durst venture to molest her, as it seemed, from her story, he had done. But with that story, I must repeat, I am unacquainted, and therefore can give no information on the subject. When our leader had settled every thing as he wished with the band, he directed the men whom he had chosen to join him at the caverns of the cottage of the Signora di Berlotti at an appointed time; that is, three days after that fixed upon by the Count Ferbonino for his sending for Orazio to meet him at Milan. At this period it was Angelo's intention to remove the signora and her daughter with their attendants, to a place of more security than the cottage, and which retirement he did not intend them to leave till after the result of Orazio's appeal should be known, for provided the innocence of the Count di Udina could be proved, and Orazio restored to his birth-rights, the memory of the Count di Mirandini would likewise be cleared of the stain which had been fixed upon his

name, and his injured wife thus enabled to seek justice for the wrongs done her by the Count de Weilburgh. But, besides this cause for resolving to remove the countess, Angelo was actuated by the dislike which he had conceived for the Prior of San Ambrose, the Father Ascollini, who, although not entrusted with the secret of that lady's real name and rank, still was received in the family on such terms as rendered his interference and curiosity dangerous to one so circumstanced as the countess.

"Having heard that the father was by some regarded as a man whose avarice and private selfish luxury exceeded his piety, our leader made such general enquiries as were best calculated to ascertain the truth. The result was completely to the prior's disadvantage. Angelo rejoiced in the prudent reserve which the Countess di Mirandini had observed towards the father, and became fixed in his resolve of placing her and her daughter beyond his further observation.

"Although our leader did not apprehend any danger to his son from his temporary residence at the priory, after his having been visited there by such a man as the Count Ferbonino, still he was peculiarly anxious for the arrival of the moment in which the youth should be required to join that generous friend at Milan. Some time before he expected to receive the summons of the count, we returned to the neighbourhood of the cottage.

"While we were waiting the arrival of the letter from the Count Ferbonino, by Angelo's direction, I contrived to form an acquaintance with one of the friars belonging to the priory of San Ambrose. It required but a very slight degree of penetration to discover that this pious brother was as fond of money and good eating as his superior; and from him I learned, by the help of a few ducats and a luxurious meal, all the secrets of the priory. My principal aim, however, was to find out in what light the Signor Orazio was regarded by the prior and his community; and in this I was not disappointed; for I not only discovered that he was an object of equal curiosity and suspicion to the Father Ascollini and the society, but also that a Venetian nobleman, with whose name my informer was not acquainted, had been there making very particular enquiries respecting the Signora di Berlotti, and the young stranger just received into her cottage. What was my surprise when, on asking a description of this nobleman's person, I instantly recognized the Marchese di Rovenza. It is true, those enquiries did not appear to me to be of a hostile nature; but still I was alarmed; and as soon as I could part with the friar, flew to communicate the intelligence I had thus gathered to my captain. I have before observed that the brave Udina could never be persuaded that his cousin had had the least share in his misfortunes; but as he pro-

mised the Count di Mirandini not to place any hasty confidence in the marchese, and as he allowed the possibility that Rovenza, after so long an enjoyment of the Udina estates, might not be inclined to yield up their possessions unrepiningly, he thought it advisable to keep Orazio as much as possible from his knowledge, and therefore, as it was now within a few days of the time appointed for the latter to meet the Count at Milan, Angelo resolved to remove his son from the priory, and send him to await the arrival of the Count. This he accomplished on the following night, and then——"

"But did he not mysteriously enter the priory by a secret avenue on that night?" hastily asked one of the inquisitors.

"There was no great mystery in his so doing," replied Borachio: "that avenue was before known to me. It was by a passage through the vaults, and which had a communication with the dormitory of the friars, and as I had in this manner several times visited the cell of the father Justine at midnight, with a good flask or two of wine, when all the rest of the society were fast asleep, it was not difficult for Angelo to take the same course; by this expedient Orazio was spared the necessity of taking a formal leave, and escaped the chance of being watched on his journey to Milan.—The romantic youth had, however, nearly ruined all by contriving to stop in the garden of the Signora

di Berlotti, where he had the good, or rather the ill-fortune to encounter the young Cecilia, who, seeing Angelo, and suspecting him to be in company with her lover, was so terrified that she fainted, and next day, it was reported all over the neighbourhood that the young stranger, who had been at the priory, was one of Angelo Guicciardini's men, which, however, prevented, rather than forwarded, any very warm pursuit after him.

"When Angelo had set the young man forward on his way, he returned to me, and then bent his thoughts on informing the countess of his design of immediately removing herself and family from their abode, and with this intention, he that night repaired to the caverns of the cottage. The countess, however, was not there that night. On the following night Angelo repeated his visit. He waited near the tomb till after the usual hour of the countess's appearing: still she came not, and he proceeded to the passage and steps which led up to the cottage.—The iron door was strongly fastened, but he heard within, the voices of men in violent altercation; but these sounds suddenly died away, and Angelo, finding his efforts to force the door unsucessful, returned hastily through the caverns, meaning to go to the front entrance. In his haste, he dropped the long black cloak in which he was enveloped in order to conceal his dress, which was now that usually worn by him as the leader of our band.—As he

hurried over the rugged ground of the cavern, he fancied he heard the accents of a female voice uttering the low plaints of sorrow; they seemed to proceed from a recess near which he was passing. Instantly he paused, and then rushed towards the spot, where, to his amazement, he beheld the young Cecilia.—She fainted on beholding him, but her exclamation had informed him that the men, whose voices he had heard in the cottage, must belong to the Count de Weilburgh. Instantly comprehending the whole affair, and eager to place the lovely girl in one of the more obscure intricacies of the cavern, till he could discover what had taken place in the cottage, he carried her in his arms from the recess, but the young timid creature was so much alarmed at being in his power, that she contrived to give him the slip, and after an unsuccessful search for her till it was nearly day-light, he was most reluctantly obliged to leave her to the chance of those dangers she might encounter in that place, and then returned to me with an account of the adventures of the night. That the countess had been carried off by some strange cavaliers from her cottage, was soon ascertained, and Angelo had no resource but to wait the arrival of his men, and then send off a party in pursuit of her. Happily, they were expected with the return of night. When this was settled, he returned to the caverns to renew his search for the poor Cecilia, who,

however, was no where to be found. During his absence, I learned that she had been discovered there by a nobleman, who, with some of his attendants, had passed the night at the priory; and, on further enquiry, I had little difficulty to understand that this nobleman was the Marchese di Rovenza.

"When Angelo returned to the lonely hut which was the place of our rendezvous, he received this information with sensations of equal surprise and concern. His interference was, however, utterly imposible and while this circumstance imposed upon him the necessity of strict concealment, he could only console himself with the knowledge that Cecilia was alike ignorant of her mother's history, and that of Orazio. The only thing which could now be done, was for me to see the friar who had already given me so much information, and enquire from him the occasion of the marchese's visit to the priory. Accordingly, when at night-fall, Angelo again repaired to the cavern, in hourly expectation of the arrival of the party of men appointed to meet him there, I went in quest of my friar, from whom I discovered that Rovenza's present visit had the same object as before, namely, to make further enquiries respecting the young Orazio, at whose sudden flight he had been much displeased: professing, however, the most friendly interest in the youth's wel-

fare. On leaving the friar, I hastened to the cavern of the cottage, where I found Angelo engaged with the men, who had arrived exactly at the time fixed. He was writing a few lines to the countess, which he gave with such directions as he thought best for the pursuit, and retaining but two of his followers, sent off the rest with all possible dispatch on the expedition. When they were gone, I related to him what the friar had told me. Rovenza's earnest conduct respecting Orazio gave him considerable surprise and uneasiness .It appeared to be highly improbable that the marchese should have discovered who the youth really was, and yet the deep interest he seemed to feel on his account, implied, at least, some suspicion of the truth. However, as Angelo could not yet prevail on himself to think very unfavourably of his artful cousin, he was more inclined to believe that he wished to serve, rather than to injure him. At all events, nothing could at present be done in the affair. Under the protection of the Count Ferbonino, and countenanced by the Bishop of Verona, whom the former had promised to interest in his favour, Udini did not suppose his son to be in any immediate danger, and therefore resolved to content himself with setting some watch on the actions of the marchese, before he should decide on the nature of his intentions. At the present moment, the situation of the young Cecilia

most peculiarly demanded attention, and to this circumstance Udina now directed all his thoughts.

"On the following morning I ascertained that the marchese designed to take the young lady and her attendant with him to Venice, and to place her under the protection of his lady, till it could be discovered what had become of her mother. This conduct certainly appeared equally just and kind, and served to renew in the unsuspicious mind of Udina his good opinion of Rovenza. For the marchesa he entertained all that affection and veneration to which her relationship to his lamented Veronica, and her own inestimable qualities, entitled her; and feeling convinced that under the protection of that amiable lady, the lovely young Cecilia must be equally secure and respected, he altered his intention of setting a spy on the actions of the marchese, and suffered him unmolested to convey away the young lady to Venice. The apprehension, however, that some accidental meeting between Orazio and Cecilia might, by her believing him to be linked with the bands of Angelo Guicciardini, be prejudicial to his son's interests, determined Udina to acquaint the amiable marchesa with the situation of her nephew, and to implore for him her private friendship. Accordingly he sketched a short detail of Orazio's life, and sent it off to the marchesa the very morning of the departure of the marchese and Ce-

cilia for Venice. As his messenger travelled with the utmost speed, the marchesa received the packet nearly two days prior to their arrival. The return of the messenger, who was one of our own men properly disguised, brought to Angelo the welcome news of Cecilia's safe arrival at the Pallazo di Rovenza, and thus more firmly persuaded of the rectitude of his cousin, he augured, from his behaviour to Cecilia the best intentions towards Orazio, if, indeed, the marchese was really acquainted with his relationship to him. Thus flattering himself with the pleasing hope, that Rovenza would rather aid than impede the success of the intended appeal to the state, Angelo, accompanied by myself and my two companions, returned to our haunt in the Mount St. Gothard, there to await the result of the pursuit made after the Count de Weilburgh, and to arrange the proceedings of the band during our future absence. In the space of eight days, from the time of the countess's being carried off, our men returned with an account of their having rescued the lady, and mortally wounding the count, and put to flight his attendants; and that the former, with her faithful old servant, was safely lodged in the place appointed for their reception. A letter addressed to her daughter, in a disguised hand writing, and one for Angelo himself, were then delivered to him from the countess.

"It was now that the generous and con-

fiding nature of Udina manifested itself in the most eccentric project that ever he had conceived; and all my arguments to dissuade him from the execution of it were ineffectual.

"This project was to proceed, with me and another chosen follower, to Venice, and there endeavour to obtain a private interview with the Marchese di Rovenza, to whom, without revealing himself, he meant to confide the story of Orazio, and interest him in his behalf. It is true, Udina was so much altered from his former self, that I was convinced few precautions would be necessary to disguise himself from the knowledge of his cousin, but the other hazards attendant on such an extraordinary step, were so great, that I almost believed our leader frantic when I found him fixed in his purpose.

"No personal fears, however, prevented me from resolving to brave with him all that might happen, and we proceeded, without further discussion, to Venice.

"Here my first business was to look out for a gondolier who could be safely bribed to aid in the accomplishment of our scheme and I soon discovered an expert, intelligent young man, with a disposition fit for the purpose. Quickly convinced that he could be relied on, I affected to be the agent of a foreign cavalier, who was attached to one of the female attendants of the marchesa, and engaged the undoubting

gondolier to convey the lover to the terrace of the Rovenza pallazo after midnight.

" This settled, Angelo prepared for this pretended visit, and well knowing that he would be least liable to recognition in the dress which he usually wore as captain of our band, he threw over the plain habit, in which he had come to Venice, the long wrapping cloak of black, and shaded his brow with the dark helmet and full scarlet plume which he had brought with him for this occasion. At the appointed hour, the gondola conveyed Udina and myself to the terrace of the Pallazo di Rovenza. He entered alone by a private door which he had opened with a master key. After an hour's absence, which was passed by me in the utmost anxiety, he returned once more to the gondola, and, in hurried accents, commanded the rowers to put off with all possible haste. A few jokes on his short stay and evident fear of discovery passed between the gondoliers, but Angelo preserved a solemn silence, and spoke not till we were safely retired to the house where we had taken up our temporary abode. Throwing aside his cap and cloak, he discovered to me a countenance pale and dejected, and a languor which I had never before perceived him wear. Bold as is my own spirit, I was yet intimidated by the alteration in his appearance, so much so, indeed, that I could scarcely summon courage to ask the cause of this change.

"My looks, however, were sufficiently explanatory of my wish: Udina understood them, and quickly ending my suspense, he said, 'You are surprized and shocked at the melancholy and unhappiness which my appearance bespeaks. You must cease to be so when you recollect where I have been—who could thus revisit the scenes where, in the early dawn of childhood, and the bright morn of youth, their opening prospects presented but the smiling hope of a long day, irradiated with all the brilliant joys which exalted rank, unsullied honour, fame and fortune, could bestow, or fail to be subdued by the fearful retrospection of the terrible reverse that followed!'

"He paused, and I instantly took advantage of his silence to endeavour to prevent his dwelling on a subject so harrowing to his mind, by asking him, whether he had seen the marchese.

"With a look of poignant sorrow, he replied:—

"'I have seen Rovenza, but in such a state, as forbids every further idea of my venturing to claim his friendship for my son.' He then related to me, that having entered the pallazo by a private way, well known to himself, and seldom frequented by the domestics, he had proceeded without interruption to the suite of apartments which the gondolier, on being questioned on the subject, had pointed out to him as being occupied by the marchese. The entrance door of the anti-room of this suite

opened on the principal corridor, from two opposite angles of which branched off the wide passages leading to the other apartments used as sleeping rooms. On reaching the corridor, however, he perceived that the lamps were still burning in the hall beneath, and at the entrances of the arcade passages. Concluding from this circumstance, that the family were not yet retired for the night, he was retreating to conceal himself in the unfrequented avenue that he had just quitted, when a door, at the furthest extremity of the corridor, was opened, and a female figure hastily issued forth, in whom he immediately recognised Lodelli, the attendant of the young Signora di Mirandini. The girl, without observing him, tripped lightly down the marble steps leading into the hall, and disappeared in one of the passages leading to the offices of the domestics. From the circumstance of her leaving the chamber door open after her, Angelo imagined that her young lady was still below with the family, and it instantly occurred to him that he could not find a more favourable opportunity of conveying to the hands of Cecilia the letter of her mother, than the one thus presented to him. Deeming deliberation unnecessary, he immediately proceeded to the apartment, and on entering, perceived, by the light of the candles burning on the dressing table, several articles of female dress which he believed to belong to Cecilia. Assured that he was

not mistaken in her being the occupier of this room, he placed the packet on the table, and immediately withdrawing, hastened to conceal himself in the passages by which he had entered the pallazo, till the family and domestics, should retire to repose. Scarcely, however, had he quitted the frequented parts of the edifice, than he heard the distant sounds of closing doors, and in less than a quarter of an hour all was still. He suffered another quarter to elapse ere he ventured forth from his hiding place, and when he again entered on the corridor, the darkness and silence which then pervaded the hall and passages, assured him that all within the pallazo had retired to their apartments. I need not say, I believe, with what emotion he described this moment, when shrouded in the solemn darkness of the night, he stole cautiously towards the anti-room of the marchese's apartments, once occupied by his father. Those who can comprehend the character of Costanza di Udina will judge what were his feelings at such a time.

" On reaching the door of the anti-room he listened for a few minutes: no sounds were heard within.

" He softly unclosed the door, and entered. This room was not dark; a stream of light, issuing from the half-opened door of the bed chamber, rendered objects indistinctly visible in the anti-room. Again Udina hesitated. He thought he heard the voice of Rovenza speaking in a low and falter-

ing tone, but his words were not intelligible. A pause of silence ensued.

"He utters incoherences in sleep, thought Udina, and debating for a moment longer whether he should venture to awaken the marchese immediately, he did not proceed. A heavy groan, and the voice of Rovenza uttering an exclamation, was again heard.

"It will be merciful to interrupt this dream of terror under which he surely labours!' mentally exclaimed Udina, and immediately entered the room, when the first object which presented itself to view was the gaunt figure of the marchese, standing, half undressed, in the middle of the room, and apparently engaged in contemplating something on the table before him, on which, however, nothing was placed but a small lamp, the fluttering flame of which displayed the features of Rovenza marked with the strongest expression of pallid horror. Udina, breathless with amazement and concern, stood immovable observing him, as, gazing vacantly on the table, he continued to mutter, in almost unintelligible sounds, broken sentences of the most fearful meaning. The soul of Udina was harrowed by his words; they were allusive to his own misfortunes. Several times the marchese repeated the name of Veronica, and seemed to adjure her not to curse the author of her miseries; then, wildly imploring her to sing, vowed to discover and annihilate the wretches who had destroyed her husband, and to

cherish her children as his own: and then pathetically intreated her to believe that he was innocent of Udina's death.

"Chilled with horror and surprise, Udina too soon perceived that the miserable marchese was unconscious of what he uttered, and, dreading to awake him, he precipitately left the apartment, and returned to the gondola, overwhelmed with the oppressive emotions to which this scene had given rise.

"Pausing after he had given me this account of his adventure, he seemed to expect my observations on the subject. I made none, but immediately demanded what opinion he had formed. He replied, that the excessive grief which his unhappy cousin had suffered, at the dreadful destiny of relations who had been so dear to him, had subjected him to the melancholy infirmity under which he laboured.

"My ideas on this point were totally different. I conceived that the state of Rovenza rather indicated a mind suffering under the pangs of conscious guilt; and this I instantly intimated to Udina. He was evidently struck with the suggestion, and, for the first time, suspicion of the truth entered his mind. Absolute conviction was essential, however, to the noble, generous spirit of Costanza ere he could condemn; and although the flush of indignant astonishment crossed his cheek, and was as instantly succeeded by the paleness of horror and dismay, he remained silent

till I had twice besought him not to relapse into that state of confiding credulity which I then scrupled not to declare had been his ruin.

'My suspicions are awakened, and I will search even to the centre of the globe for a solution of my doubts,' was his reply.

"I saw that he was now determined, and that no further arguments were wanting. I therefore dropped the subject, and enquired how long he intended to remain in Venice. He replied, that circumstances must determine the length of his stay. We had no further conversation that night. The next morning he told me that he had determined to place one of his men as a spy on the conduct of the marchese, and, at all events, to remove the Signora Cecilia from the Rovenza family as soon as he should see occasion.

"On this young lady's account, however, he was not much disturbed, being well assured that, while under the immediate protection of the Marchesa di Rovenza, she would receive every possible care and attention. He then declared his resolution to quit Venice immediately, in order to take the necessary measures for a private investigation of the conduct of Rovenza, and to arrange his plans for securing the safety of his son. Thus determined, Udina wrote another anonymous letter to his amiable sister-in-law, informing her when she might expect to see her nephew at the Villa di L zzana, and more

expressly cautioning her not to breathe the slightest hint of the affair to her lord.

"While he was writing this letter, it occurred to me that he could find none of his men so capable of undertaking the arduous task of secretly watching the actions of Rovenza as myself; and no sooner had he concluded the epistle, than I proposed to remain in Venice for this purpose.

"My offer was accepted by my brave leader with a degree of satisfaction that amply repaid my zeal. Nothing now detained him in Venice but the necessity of waiting for the Signora Cecilia's answer to her mother's letter, and which was safely brought to him at midnight by the faithful gondolier, who had been properly instructed on the occasion, and who imagined that he was merely bringing a love epistle to the cavalier, who had visited the pallazo the preceding night.

"Udina then set out alone for the Alps to join his band; and I, assuming the disguise of a Jew pedlar, commenced my scheme of seeking acquaintances among the household of the Marchese di Rovenza. To accomplish this was not difficult, as I took care to sell my wares tolerably cheap, and could entertain the buyers with a thousand marvellous tales; nor had I much trouble in obtaining some account of the domestic character of their lord; which, however, was represented as deficient in no perfection but the want of good temper; and this infirmity was generally attribu-

ted by them to the disorder which sometimes attacked him. To the same cause was ascribed his indifference to the society of his lady, and his indulgence to his son and daughter, the latter of whom, I learnt, was detested by every servant in the family, while of the Signora Cecilia, the new *protegée* of the marchesa, as they called her, each spoke in transports of praise. Except on such topics, however, all my rhetoric and art could not prevail on any of the domestics to speak. I discovered that it was an established rule with the marchese that none of his servants should dare to mention to any human being any occurrence which took place in the family; and this rule was most rigidly observed.

"Thus was my plot nearly frustrated; and I was obliged to confine myself to such observations as accident enabled me to make in my visits to the pallazo, which were soon terminated by the removal of the family to the Villa di Rovenza. One circumstance, however, I was enabled to ascertain; namely, that the Marchesa di Ronenza was rendered extremely unhappy by the conduct of her children, and that her lord did not allow her to exert the least controul over their actions. To refuse a good and amiable mother her natural and religious authority augured no proof of goodness or wisdom in her lord; and I drew my conclusions of his real character accordingly. Finding, on the removal of the Rovenza family from Venice, that I

could not, at least for the present, procure any information which might be of service, I threw aside my disguise, and set off for our place of rendezvous.

" Here I found our leader, for the first time, involved in a state of disunion and dissatisfaction with the band. Unemployed in any of their usual expeditions, they were impatient of their state of inactivity, and were vehemently requiring some occasion for exertion. At length a party was sent out against the castle of an old Swiss baron, who, if he could not depress his tenants as much as he was inclined to do, had, however, contrived to make himself completely hateful to all the country round, by every act of cruelty and oppression in his power. As the baron was very rich, this expedition promised much; and the party sent out on the occasion went off in high spirits, leaving their companions sufficient subject for conversation in the anticipated result of the enterprise.

" Udina, now once more at liberty, prepared to return into the Venetian territories. His earnest desire to commence a deep investigation of Rovenza's former conduct, and present character and intentions, imperiously urged him to this step: besides, although he knew that he could not personally assist the cause of his son, yet the idea that his being near this beloved youth might be of service on any sudden emergency, tended to increase his impatient anxiety to set off. On the day after the

departure of the men sent to attack the castle of the Baron de Glostock, Angelo, accompanied by myself, set out on our return towards Venice; but as it was now the period when Orazio was expected to be at the Villa di Luzzana, he proposed remaining a few days at Padua; the villas both of the Countess di Luzzana and that of the Marchese di Rovenza being situated so near that town as to allow of constant opportunities of gleaning some intelligence of what was passing in either.

"In Padua, neither Angelo nor myself had occasion to apprehend any danger of recognition. Influenced by the strong repugnance which he felt to revisit the scenes of his early years, he had never once ventured into those parts of the Venetian territories till the concerns of his son induced him to do so, and we were now so well disguised that there was nothing to be dreaded, even from those who might have seen us before. It was not, however, the intention of Udina to venture near the villas, unless some very important occasion should compel him, and he decided to remain secretly in Padua, while I should endeavour to learn what was going forward in the habitation of the Marchese di Rovenza. Clad in the wretched weeds of a wandering mendicant, I therefore soon recommenced my plan of operation. My first visit was to the Villa di Luzzana, where, in my ostensible character, I received the most liberal relief, and also had

an opportunity of learning that the countess had then no visitors.

"Having thus ascertained that Orazio was not yet arrived there, I proceeded to seek charity at the Villa di Rovenza, and I must say that I had no cause to complain of my reception. Want of charity, at least, could not be reckoned amongst the marchese's faults; for his household were commanded never to refuse relief to the poor, and the good marchesa took strict care to see this excellent rule well observed. In this second attempt to make discoveries, I was far more successful than I had been in my first; several of the domestics of the villa being much more simple and communicative than those at the pallazo; one in particular, a groom belonging to a visitor, called the Signor Faenza, gave me no small share of intelligence, as from him I heard that his master was violently in love with the Signora Cecilia, who was represented as not insensible to his pretensions, and even preferred him to the Signor Leonardo di Rovenza, who was also declared to be another of her admirers. Respecting the Marchese di Rovenza, however, I learnt nothing new. His goodness, and that of his lady to their young *protegée*, was highly extolled, and she herself was universally praised, while all parties were anxious to know who she was. The information relative to her reception of the Signor Faenza's attentions, I well knew would not be pleasing to Udina, and no

sooner had I repeated it to him, than he determined to see her, and to warn her to beware of giving the least encouragement to his addresses. In the course of a few days, a favourable opportunity seemed to occur. The marchesa gave a masked ball to her friends. On this night, Angelo was determined to seek a few minutes conversation with the young signora. In the concourse of company assembled, he believed that he should pass unnoticed, but not chusing to appear before the Signora Cecilia in any other character than his own, he resumed his bandit's dress, and in the darkness of the night, proceeded to the gardens of the Villa di Rovenza."

Borachio was now again interrupted by an enquiry as to the motive of Udina in preferring to appear in his bandit's character, when under the disguise of an assumed one he could have as easily conversed with Cecilia, and have better evaded the danger of discovery. To this he replied,

"That Angelo, having promised to Cecilia his especial protection, wished her instantly to recognize him, and in every instance, to inspire her with the idea that he took the most active interest in her concerns—that he was acquainted with all her actions, and that his power was equal to his will to serve her.

"The consequences of thus exposing himself to the hazard of discovery were exactly what I dreaded they would prove," continued Borachio.

" He was disappointed of a proper opportunity of speaking to the young lady, and received the additional vexation of finding her in company with the very man whom he wished her to avoid; besides being under the disagreeable necessity of using intimidating language to her, in the hope of inducing her to conceal his name. To heighten his difficulties, a few days afterwards, he heard that the Venetian government had issued orders for his apprehension wherever he could be found. This, however, was a circumstance which enraged without terrifying him, and in order to ascertain with whom these proceedings against him originated, he immediately hastened to Venice, where he determined to remain for some time, believing himself more secure in the heart of the city, than he could be in any other part of the Venetian territories. I dare say it is already known to the council, that, during his stay in Venice, he chiefly secreted himself in the private vaults of the church of San Mosco, and that one person only, who is since dead, the Father Paulo, was privy to his concealment."

Borachio paused, but was instantly ordered to continue his relation.

" He did not however proceed to Venice without first sending a line to Orazio, informing him where he was to be heard of, in case the youth should wish to address him. In Venice Angelo had not been

three days, when he discovered, by means of the Father Paulo, that the proceedings then commenced against him by the state were instigated by the Procurator Corcivello, whom he had once contrived to punish for an act, of which the council will receive a circumstantial account in his own history.

"The knowledge of this fact did not, however, incline him to leave Venice, and a few days afterwards, he had occasion to congratulate himself on his remaining there, as he then had an opportunity of seeing his son who sought him at San Mosco, to gain from him some intelligence respecting the pretended Signora di Berlotti, which, however, Udina did not chuse to give him at the time, and, contenting himself with slightly cautioning him to be guarded with the Rovenza family, suffered him to depart without any explanation relative to the real name and circumstances of the Countess di Mirandini. Amongst all the brave Udina's troubles, the distant reserve with which Orazio treated him from the period of his discovering the real nature of his pursuits, was the greatest: and this very circumstance more firmly determined him never to reveal to that valued son that he was his father. It was the day following this interview, that Angelo so narrowly escaped the hands of the sbirri, who had traced him to a house on the Rialto, where some

of his men, whom he had ordered to follow him to Venice, previous to his leaving the Alps, had just arrived.

"The scuffle that ensued, and the singular escape, which the darkness of the night enabled both himself and the few who were with him, to effect, is too well known to need repetition. I must observe, however, that the people of that house were, as has doubtless been already ascertained, perfectly ignorant of the real character of either Angelo, or the men who joined him there, and that they actually believed them to be foreign merchants, as they appeared to be.

"After this escape, Angelo and his party instantly fled from Venice. A high price easily procured a proper gondola, and once on terra firma, they knew where speedily to regain their horses. The men were sent by separate routes to a place of rendezvous near a little obscure hamlet in the Paduano, to wait till further orders, and Angelo returned to Padua, where I was most anxiously waiting to receive some intelligence from him. His account of the secret occurrences in Venice, filled me with the greatest alarm, and I vehemently urged him to quit the Venetian territories with the utmost speed. This he promised to do, but not before he could contrive to procure another interview with the Signora Cecilia, whom he was determined not to leave uncautioned against Faenza. It was in vain for me to represent the absurdity

and danger of the attempt. Fear was a feeling unknown to Angelo, and, as if intuitively conscious that he had no cause for apprehension, he disregarded my arguments. He was sensible, however, that he could not again venture near the Villa di Rovenza, and therefore devised a stratagem for endeavouring to bring the young lady to the Villa di Luzzana. For this purpose, he wrote, in the name of Orazio, to the countess, requesting, in the most urgent manner, that she would attempt to obtain for him a private interview with the Signora Cecilia at her own villa, as he had something of the utmost importance to commuicate to her; previous to his visiting the Villa di Rovenza.

"In making such a request in the name of the supposed Signor Locendro, Angelo did not hesitate, for he well knew that the amiable countess had too much good sense to imagine that any man, who was not actuated by the most important and honourable motive, would presume to take such a liberty. The countess, who was strongly interested in favour of the young Orazio by her uncle, the good Bishop of Verona, complied with the request, but the young lady was compelled to decline the invitation, in consequence of the prohibition of the Marchese di Rovenza. At least, the billet in which the countess replied to the supposed Locendro intimated as much; and thus Udina was once more disappointed of seeing Cecilia, whom he would have contrived some means of

removing from the protection of the Rovenza family, had he not wished her to continue where she might have some opportunities of seeing Orazio. The day after this event, at the earnest entreaty of Udina, I once more ventured, in my mendicant habit, to the Villa di Rovenza, when the first news I learnt was the attack made by the Signor Faenza on the life of Leonardo di Rovenza, the flight of the signor, and his seizure by the Swiss officer, Locendro, who had arrived so opportunely as to prevent his escape.

"The favourable reception which, I was also informed, the Rovenza family had given to Orazio, almost dispelled all my doubts of the goodness of the marchese's real character, and when I acquainted Udina with this important intelligence, all his confidence in the honour and rectitude of his cousin revived; for, allowing that Rovenza suspected the truth, there now seemed no reason to suppose that he would prove an obstacle to the just restoration of the young man's birth-rights, could the innocence of his father be proved. The present prosecution commenced against Angelo by the state of Venice was, however, extremely unfavourable to the cause of Orazio, and, in order to avoid the discovery which might follow his falling into the hands of the council, he began to resolve on immediately withdrawing from the Venetian territories, though aware of the necessity which existed for some

person to be always on the watch for information of whatever should occur at the Villa di Rovenza.

"My alarms for my own safety were now so much abated, that, after a little reflection on the subject, I proposed remaining, in my mendicant disguise, in Padua, on condition that he himself would immediately depart, to which he instantly acceded, and on his quitting me I renewed my promise of sending him immediate information of every incident which should come to my knowledge.

"When Angelo was gone, I seemed to enjoy perfect liberty from all apprehensions of personal discovery, and was now a daily loiterer near the villas and pallazos which stretched along that part of the Brenta. Fortune seemed at this time to smile upon me with peculiar kindness, for in one of my petitioning visits to the Villa di Rovenza, I accidentally attracted the notice of one of the Signora Ottavania's women, who thought proper to imagine me to be well versed in the fortune-telling art, and questioned me accordingly. Such an opportunity was not to be missed. I affected some mystery, but at length, when I found that her curiosity was sufficiently excited, confessed myself a secret proficient in the practice of divination. Availing myself of the small share of information relative to the family which I had already gleaned, I threw out such hints as led the now astonished damsel to believe me possessed of

an almost necromantic skill. To attempt to conceal any thing from the wonderful man who seemed to be acquainted with every thing, she thought, would be a superfluous piece of reserve; therefore, without scruple, she asked me whether her signora would be married to the young strange officer she was so much in love with her, and whether the Signor Leonardo would marry the Signora Cecilia.—In short, I soon discovered that the marchese approved of his daughter's choice of Orazio, and that his son was violently in love with the young Signora di Mirandini, whose real name and rank was unsuspected in the family in general. The positive assurance that Rovenza had testified the utmost approbation of his daughter's union with Orazio, was now a sufficient indication that he was acquainted with his real situation, and this earnestness to forward such an alliance, I justly conceived to be a convincing proof that he was well inclined towards the youth. This was sufficient to assure me that Orazio had nothing to apprehend from the marchese, and as soon as I returned to Padua, I sent off this pleasing intelligence to Udina. For nearly a fortnight after this discovery, I continued to pay occasional visits to the Villa di Rovenza, but never could gain any further information as to what was passing in the family, the young woman, who had been so communicative to me, having been betrayed to the marchese for listening to the

tales of a fortune-teller, in consequence of which, she was peremptorily prohibited from such an imprudence in future, and the most strict commands given that, if I ever attempted to delude any other of the domestics in that manner, I should no longer receive charitable assistance. That I received assistance at all after this, was to me extremely surprising, and beginning to apprehend that I might be suspected of some design, I thought it high time to decamp from the Venetian territories, and make the best of my way to our retreat in the Mount St. Gothard.

"I was determined, however, to pay a farewel visit to my friends at the Villa di Rovenza; but what was my surprise, when, as I was slowly entering the avenue, the first object which struck my sight, was an elegant equipage of the marchese's, in which were seated the Signora Cecilia and her attendant, Lodelli, driving down the avenue. Concealing my surprise from the observation of the servants, I stood aside while the carriage passed, and then proceeded to the villa, resolved to leave no effort untried to discover whither the young lady was going. This I had no difficulty in finding out, as several of the lower female domestics were lamenting the departure of the signora, and her merry attendant, who, they said, would lead but a dismal life in the convent to which her young mistress was travelling. Wherefore the Signora Cecilia was hurried to this

convent, I could not, however, learn, but the publicity of her journey prevented my entertaining any doubts as to the avowed place of her destination.

"Perceiving no particular occasion for my retarding my journey, I was inclined to leave Padua on the following day, when it occurred to me that I ought to run the hazard of remaining a few days longer, in order to attempt ascertaining the cause of the Signora Cecilia's sudden removal. The event of my determination proved how fortunately I had decided, for when three days after I again ventured to the gates of the villa, the very first, and, indeed, the only person I encountered, was my talkative young friend, the Signora Ottavania's maid. It was a moment of too much consequence to this girl for her to remember the threats and commands of the marchese; and the instant she beheld me, she beckoned me into a retired part of the shrubbery which surrounds the villa, and with a haste and avidity which marked her eagerness, asked me, whether I could tell her where the Signora Cecilia had been carried off to. Astonished and confounded as I was at the question, I was compelled to conceal my feelings, and as soon as I could reply, I gravely said, 'Her lover has not confided in you then?' 'There, there!' exclaimed the girl, 'I'll forfeit my new rosary if that is'nt true. Ay, ay, I knew it was a lover. It is either the Signor Faenza, or the Signor Leonardo, that has been the

contriver of this fine plan, and one of them it was who took her away from our people.—I told them so when they came home, all torn and tattered, and in such a fright this morning, with their nonsensical story of a troop of robbers running away with the young lady. And now I dare say you know which of those signors have managed this business so well."

"The girl looked at me so impatiently for my decision, that I durst not hesitate, and therefore ventured to pronounce in a mysterious tone :—

"The Signor Leonardo—' 'You need say no more, you need say no more,' cried the girl, wildly interrupting me, and crossing herself with much devotion.—'I knew it was of no use to promise Fabian that I wouldn't tell, for I guessed there was one besides myself that knew the secret; and the Signor Leonardo has sent her off out of his rival's way, to some one of his father's old castles, till he's well enough to court her himself.'

"The strange singularity of this discovery struck me so forcibly, that I had scarcely power to continue to play on the foolish simplicity and credulity of my informer, who again stared wistfully in my face for my further confirmation of her belief in my wonderful powers. At length recovering myself, I said, 'Fabian told you truth ;—and the castle to which she had been carried is amongst the mountains of——' I paused, because I could not

mention where; but my sagacious observer, imagining that I hesitated to let her know too much, was determined to shew me she was as well informed on the subject as she thought me to be, and instantly gave me the clue I wanted, by exclaiming, 'Aye, tis the Castle of Torcello.'

"At this moment, one of the servants appeared beneath the south colonnade, and the girl ran off. I stood immovable, rivetted to the spot by the astonishment which I could not conquer, till the approach of the servant, who was advancing to tell me that I could not be relieved that day, as the family and domestics were too busily occupied about a misfortune which had just occurred. Starting, I asked what misfortune.—'The loss of a young lady,' replied the man, and then left me.—Mechanically I moved down the avenue, revolving in my mind what course I had now to pursue.

"After some slight reflection on the subject, I believed I had better proceed, with all the dispatch I could use, to our retreat in the Alps, and personally apprize Angelo of what had occurred. In consequence of this determination, I quitted Padua that day. On arriving at the place of rendezvous, I found both Angelo and the party who had escaped with him from Venice, and that considerable booty had been taken at the castle of the old Swiss baron. Our leader was, however, so much absorbed by the concerns of his son, that

he took but little interest in those of his men. The information I brought him respecting the young Cecilia exceedingly surprised and chagrined him. Informed of the impetuous character of Leonardo di Rovenza, he doubted not the authenticity of my intelligence. The projected union between Orazio and Ottavania seemed, however, to inspire him with a full assurance that his son had nothing to apprehend from the Marchese di Rovenza's opposing the sought for restoration of his birth-right; yet his knowledge of the mutual attachment subsisting between Orazio and Cecilia di Mirandini, made him instantly resolve that no alliance with Ottavania should take place. In the present crisis of affairs, however, no immediate interference in the plans of the marchese could be deemed prudent, and therefore it only remained to attempt rescuing Cecilia from the power of the Signor Rovenza, and to place her with her mother, 'till the fortunes of her lover should be decided. The Castle of Torcello was well known to Udina, who, some years after the admission of Arnolfo di Aretina into his family, had once visited it in company with the latter, and made some stay there. With the intricacies of this ancient edifice he was therefore well acquainted, and considered the carrying off Cecilia from thence as an affair of no great difficulty. We had private and secure holds in various parts of the Alps; one in the mountains of the

Cadorino in particular, which is remarkable for the difficulty of access, and the impervious secrecy of its path. This recess, which we had not used for above two years, now seemed to promise us an excellent retreat in our meditated enterprize, and thither Angelo resolved to convey Cecilia, 'till the hurry of pursuit, which might probably be raised after her by the people of Leonardo, should abate, and he could place her for a time with her mother in some convent. Confident of success in his meditated attempt to carry off this young lady from the castle, and attentive to the consideration of the inconvenience and uneasiness to which a delicate young female would be exposed on finding herself alone in the society of a troop of banditti, Angelo immediately sent off two of his men to conduct the Countess di Mirandini to the subterranean in the mountains of the Cadorino, where she might be ready to receive her daughter, and afterwards to accompany her to the convent.

" Selecting a party, on whose courage and fidelity he could well depend, Angelo and myself thus accompanied, set forward for the Cadorino.

" At the expiration of some days, we reached the outskirts of the dreary domain of the Castle of Torcello. It was at the close of a heavy and lowering evening when we arrived within sight of the edifice, which, perched on the summit of

a rude and almost perpendicular cliff, appeared inaccessible. Halting, at the command of our captain, we surveyed the castle, with looks which tolerably well expressed our opinion of the difficulties we expected to encounter; but our uneasiness was almost instantly dispelled by Udina's directing us to dismount, and secure our horses, at the same time that he pointed out to our notice a narrow chasm at the foot of the cliff on which the castle stood. In silence and haste, we obeyed, and leaving our beasts to the care of two of our companions, followed the hasty steps of Angelo towards the chasm. It was sufficiently wide to admit two persons abreast, and appeared to be the entrance of a natural and rugged passage winding through the interior of the cliff. Before we entered, we lighted several torches, and then followed the guidance of our leader in the same silence we had before observed. As we advanced, we perceived that the passage gradually widened in some parts, and was at others even narrower than at the entrance. Above half an hour had passed in proceeding along this avenue, when we suddenly emerged into the vaults of the castle. The lengthened, and oft repeated echos of our footsteps, would have informed us of their amazing extent and height, had not Angelo, as we continued to proceed, told us that these vaults were nearly a mile in length.

"We are now approaching that part

where the dungeons are situated,' he added, and then made some observations on the singular construction of those cells of imprisonment. We still kept advancing for about a quarter of an hour, when at length we reached the part he had mentioned. The vault was here much narrower and lower than those we had passed through, and the massy grated doors of the dungeons were soon visible to our view. By the formation of the gratings, we perceived that the dungeons were low arched recesses scooped out of the solid rock.

"Those gratings when once closed,' observed Angelo, 'can never be re-opened but by destroying them, the iron railing at the bottom, penetrating so far into the rocky ground, that it must be severed before the door can be unclosed.'

"Scarcely had he concluded these words when a low and hollow moaning struck our attention. It seemed to proceed from one of the dungeons before which we had stopped. After a momentary pause of surprise, Angelo demanded whether any prisoner was confined there. A feeble and sepulchral voice replied in the affirmative, and with a struggling effort, implored mercy.

"Who are you?—Wherefore are you here confined? and how long have you been an inhabitant of this horrible place?' asked our leader, as he made a signal to his men to prepare the files and other instruments with which they were usually pro-

vided when they made excursions to any strong edifice.

" Many miserable years have I been here imprisoned,' faintly replied the voice, 'and surely the sufferings I have endured, respecting the fate of those I have so basely wronged, has been a severer torment to me than all the cruelty of the vile Arnolfo. Oh! in mercy, stranger, tell me whether the good and illustrious family of Udina still flourishes?'

Had a thunderbolt burst on the head of Angelo, he could not have been more shocked than he was at this question. Aghast and immovable he stood, while every feature seemed fixed in agony, till roused from this dreadful state of feeling by the approach of some of the men who advanced to commence their operations for setting the prisoner at liberty, he started into animation, and violently motioning them away, loudly demanded of the confined wretch a full confession of his crimes. The miserable being, inspired by the hope of obtaining his highly-prized liberty, made an effort to give the required confession, and briefly related the crimes, into the commission of which the baseness of his own heart, and the seductive gold of Arnolfo, had drawn him; and then petitioned to be liberated, averring, that for several days he had not tasted the least sustenance, his keeper, he supposed, being dead, as he had not seen him for some weeks; when, in his last visit he had appeared to be very ill, and had left him a

large supply of such food as would keep for a time; but which was quite exhausted.'

"Udina listened in deep silence.—Every faculty was absorbed in horror and astonishment; and when the prisoner ceased, he instantly commanded him to be set at liberty, and then fled precipitately into an obscure part of the vault to give a loose to his feelings. I durst not follow. The eager dexterity of our men soon enabled them to accomplish the destruction of the lower bars of the dungeon, and the miserable Biondello di Balvo was lifted forth at the moment of the return of Udina, who had recovered from the first shock of the information he had thus almost miraculously received. He looked pale and calm; but it was the stern calmness of meditated vengeance which his looks expressed. He gazed on the now nearly lifeless prisoner for a moment, and then, turning to two of the men, ordered them to give him some wine from their flasks, and convey him to their newly appointed place of rendezvous as speedily and as carefully as they could. The cavern was fortunately not a day's journey from the castle, and this order could be obeyed without much hazard to the life of the poor wretch, who was soon carried away by the men directed to escort him.

"Not one more observation on this incident did Udina make, and his silence imposed equal taciturnity on the few of the

band who were acquainted with his real name and story, the concealment of which they had faithfully observed from the moment of his becoming their leader. His looks, however, as he motioned them to follow, spoke so forcibly the fixed intention of justice and revenge that burned in his breast, that it imparted all his own ardour to their minds; and an enthusiastic animation seemed to seize the whole troop, as, with uplifted cimeters, they exclaimed—

"Justice or death!' the motto of the band, and re-commenced their march through the hollow echoing vaults.

"In silent haste we passed along towards the extremity of the vaults, and entered a long winding passage, terminated by a flight of stone steps; on ascending which, we found ourselves in one of the lower galleries of the castle. Strictly attentive to the slightest motion of our leader, we halted as he paused before the folding doors of an apartment, from which the sound of voices seemed to proceed. They were the voices of the Marchese di Rovenza and the young Signora di Mirandini. Udina hesitated not a moment. He rushed in. The guilty Rovenza, although he did not recognise his much injured cousin, yet shrunk abjectly appalled before the stranger, while in tones of thunder he proclaimed his knowledge of ... crime, avowed himself the intended ... of Udina's ruin. But the great m... ostanza was not formed for the

long continued ebullition of indignant threats, and he soon left the castle with the men who assisted to bear away the young Cecilia di Mirandini; whilst I, with the majority of our party, rushed through the lofty galleries and halls, in search of the female attendant of the Signora Cecilia, whom we soon discovered in the great hall, and gave her into the care of two of our men, with orders to conduct her in safety to the Convent of Santa Clara, the superior of which had been prepared for her coming: Angelo did not chuse that she should accompany her young lady to the cavern, lest the loquacity of her disposition might at some future period betray the secret.

"On the young woman's being taken from the hall, it once more resounded with the cry of vengeance shouted by our men, who wildly rushing onward through the apartments of the castle, sought in vain some object to oppose them, till, on entering the western tower, we encountered Leonardo di Rovenza and his servant.

"Both were armed, and both rashly attempted to impede our progress. The rage of some of the men at this resistance was uncontroulable, and in a few minutes both were slain, and the tower fired in three places. As we were retreating from the flames, we heard the shrieks of a female. It was an old woman who had probably flown to the tower for safety, and we discovered her just as the flooring

at the extremity of the gallery was in a blaze, and beheld her fall amid the flames.

"The express command of Angelo for us not to assail the life of Rovenza himself secured the latter from our vengeance, and the few servants that were with him had hid themselves from our view. Disdaining to enrich ourselves with the massy plate which ornamented some of the sideboards, we left the marchese to take his chance in the burning edifice, and hastened after our captain and the rest of the troop, whom we soon overtook, as they used not their usual expedition in consideration of the young signora.

"Condemning the firing of the tower, and lamenting the death of Leonardo, who had never injured him, Udina reproved our rashness, and then, taking me aside, implored me to venture once more into the Paduano, to see Orazio, and acquaint him with the discovery of Rovenza's treachery; and also to learn what intelligence had as yet been received from the Count Ferbonino. Unwilling as I was to hazard my own safety in this excursion, still I was so perfectly aware of the necessity of the measure, that I instantly signified my compliance. We then proceeded in silence to our intended haunt, where I was to equip myself for the journey, and receive further instructions.

"On our arrival we found the Countess di Mirandini already arrived. I was too much occupied that night to learn what

passed at this meeting between the mother and daughter. The young lady was violently ill, and rather delirious, but the following day, when she was scarcely recovered enough to be able to speak, Angelo learned from the men who had carried her attendant, Lodelli, to the little Convent of Santa Clara, that Orazio had been at the Castle of Torcello. Alarmed and enraged by this account, which the frightened Lodelli had revealed in her lamentations, and which was now confirmed by the Signora Cecilia, and dreading that the marchese, instead of permitting the young Udina to depart for Venice, would confine him in some part of the castle, Angelo immediately resolved to return thither, and make the most vigorous research after his son. Instead, therefore, of my proceeding into the Paduano, I accompanied him in this expedition.

"On reaching the castle we found it deserted but by a young woman, called Paulina, who informed us that the marchese and his few attendants had quitted it that morning.

"On making enquiries respecting Orazio, the girl assured us that the strange young signor had departed some days before; that is exactly at the express period stated by the Signora Cecilia.

"Notwithstanding these assurances, we spent nearly the whole of the day in searching the uninjured parts of the castle and the subterranean; but Orazio was not to

be found. Impressed with the apprehension that his son might have been ensnared by the marchese into a horrible imprisonment, and conceiving the idea that he had, in all probability, perished in the burning tower, the grief and distraction of Udina was unbounded, and it was not without the utmost difficulty that I could prevail upon him to suspend this fearful opinion till I should endeavour to ascertain whether he had really been allowed to proceed to Venice. Catching at the faintest ray of hope, Angelo entreated me to hasten thither with all the speed I could use, and as, previous to our setting out for the castle, I was prepared for my intended journey into the Paduano, there was now no occasion to delay, and of course I immediately departed, leaving him and the troop to return to the cavern, and there await the intelligence I should send.

"Well provided with money for the occasion, I met with no obstacles in my journey, till, on reaching Bassana, I encountered an effectual check by arriving there at the very moment when the Marchese di Rovenza caused the Signor Orazio to be arrested by the sbirri. I was in the street close to the parties, and with consternation beheld the whole transaction. I instantly recognised the Count Ferbonino; but I could neither conjecture nor learn what had brought him and his young friend to Bassana. To follow to Venice, whither I heard the prisoner was to be immediately

conveyed, appeared to be now my only resource, and this I accordingly did, and on my way, contrived to draw from one of the marchese's servants, with whom I purposely began an acquaintance, that the young signor was accused by his lord as a vile impostor, who had very much deceived him, and had been in league with a band of robbers to attack and burn the Castle of Torcello. This account was not, however, so satisfactory to me as to induce me to give up my design of proceeding to Venice, where, on my arrival, I saw the Signor Orazio and his friend, the Count Ferbonino, safely lodged in Saint Mark's.

"To remain for a few days in Venice, and endeavour to discover something more of the affair, was now my fixed resolve. For this latter purpose I soon sought the Father Paulo, but, to my compleat disappointment, I found he had been dead above a fortnight. I had no other person of whom I could make the least inquiries; and while I delayed to devise some scheme for acquiring the information I wanted, placards were posted in every part of Venice, offering high rewards for the apprehension of Angelo Guicciardini, or any of his men, with the addition of promises of pardon and reward to any of the latter who would voluntarily deliver up their leader, or surrender themselves to the state inquisition, or discover whatever they might know respecting the Count and Countess di Mirandini.

"A single view of one of the placards was sufficient to let me know the danger of the Signor Orazio, and I immediately quitted Venice for the cavern in the Cadorino. Here I found Angelo and our troop anxiously expecting me.—To the former I communicated in private all I had witnessed and heard. It is needless to describe the emotions with which he received the intelligence I had brought. It was evident that Rovenza hoped to escape the fate that threatened himself by the ruin of Orazio.

"To have Biondello immediately conveyed to Venice, and delivered into the hands of the inquisition, was obviously the proper measures to be pursued to save Orazio; as this dreadful evidence of Rovenza's guilt would effectually prove the malace of the latter in causing the apprehension of the former.

"Instantly resolving on this step, Angelo appeared before the whole of the men assembled in the cavern, and after briefly stating to them the nature of the placards, proposed to any two of them to convey Biondello to Venice, and avail themselves of the offer of pardon held out to them. After their surprise and vexation had a little subsided, they all refused the task and the advantages attending it, alleging, that they would all die rather than run the hazard of being compelled to betray their captain. Angelo assured them that he would carefully avoid all his former haunts, and effectually conceal himself. Thinking him ca-

pable of fulfilling this assurance, two of the troop at length agreed to the proposal, and the following morning sat out with the miserable Biondello for Venice.—Careful for his own safety, as it might prove conducive to that of his son, Udina then endeavoured to lull the terrors which he suffered on that son's account, and to devote his thoughts to those measures which his present exigences rendered it necessary for him to adopt.

"The Countess di Mirandini and her daughter were still in the caverns, but their immediate removal to the convent where they were expected was then become essential to their own ease and safety. Before the departure of these ladies, however, Udina, impressed with a full presentiment that he could not long remain unknown, and eager to palliate to his son the course he had pursued, revealed himself to the Countess di Mirandini, and confided to her care a journal of every event of his life, which she was to put into the hands of Orazio, should the latter be released on the conviction of the Marchese di Rovenza; an event which the strong and undeniable evidence of his guilt seemed to render certain.

"When the ladies were sent off, under an escort of the troop, to the Convent of Santa Clara, Angelo assembled the remainder of his men, and declared to them his now fixed intention of resigning his command, and of retiring for the rest of his

days into the privacy of monastic seclusion. This declaration, as I had forwarned him it would, produced the most terrible ferment of dissatisfaction among them. Deprived of such a leader, they considered their association at an end; the general murmur seemed to imply an instantaneous resolve of revenging what they termed an ill-timed desertion.—The promises of pardon held out by the state inquisition of Venice to any who would deliver up Angelo Guicciardini into the power of that tribunal was a temptation which few of them now seemed inclined to resist.

" Udina, perceiving that he had been imprudently precipitate, but too noble-minded to extricate himself from this dilemma by falsehood or evasion, persisted in his intention, and endeavoured to prevail on them to suffer him to select from among themselves a new chief.

" The men turned in disgust and anger from this proposal.—They argued that, as all their haunts were likely to be discovered, nothing was left for them but to break up the band, and secure their own safety as well as they could, either by deperately joining other parties of banditti, in remote countries, or by availing themselves of the offers of the state of Venice.

" In short, both Angelo and myself soon found that argument and remonstrance would be useless, and that he had no alternative but to remain with the troop, or suffer himself to be given up.

"At length, on reflection, he resolved to temporise, and request a few days for consideration. This request was acceded to, but it was evident that his sincerity was doubted.

"Ever prompt and inflexible in resolving and acting, Angelo had never before been known to turn from his once declared purpose, and a conduct so new could not fail to excite suspicion. He now asked this delay merely to gain time for reasoning them into a compliance with his wishes; but it was imagined that he intended to escape, and leave them to their destiny. He was therefore watched with the most vigilant care. My reflections in this interval were as painful as those of my companions, and I felt equally certain that, if once deserted by Angelo, we should never maintain the same order or rule of action which his example and influence had hitherto enforced amongst us. The command of a set of men, accustomed to the control of an enthusiast of such superior talents, was a distinction from which we all shrunk, because each individual felt conscious that his inferiority would soon be perceived, and his authority consequently disregarded.

"Courageous even to heroism in the moment of danger—fertile in resources to avoid it as was Angelo, yet the present difficulty was not of a nature to be evaded. We passed the night in silence and irresolution, and the next day found us in the same perplexity. From what I ob-

served in the looks and manners of the men, I could not doubt that Angelo would be sacrificed to their fears and interest, and that unless I joined the party against him, I should share the same fate. It was on the evening of the second day, that the idea of giving him up myself first struck me. This design was suggested by the reflection that, as it was almost impossible for him to avoid falling into the hands of justice, it would be better that he should be betrayed by one, who, from a thorough knowledge of every event of his life, would be of some service to him, by detailing those incidents with truth and candour, than to suffer him to be delivered up by those who were almost unacquainted with his history. I knew that the disclosure of the secret services he had rendered to the state might give him some claims to mercy, but I was also certain that life would not be acceptable to him on such terms. The more I reflected on the subject, the more determined I became in my purpose, and at length the means of accomplishing it alone employed my thoughts.

" The return of another morning without Angelo's giving a decisive reply to the troop produced increased murmurs and alarms amongst them. Impatient to quit a retreat where they dreaded every hour being discovered and seized, they now more vehemently urged a new declaration of his intentions. Thus urged, he threw aside all reserve, and again acknowledged that his resolution to relinquish his late pursuits

was unalterable. He then pointed out to them the best methods to ensure their own safety, and, above all, advised a separation till they could again unite without danger. He was heard in silence, and the sullen acquiescence that followed, clearly evinced the discontent and designs of his hearers. Assured that no further attempts to dissuade him from his purpose would be successful, and secretly intent on their own views, the men gave up all argument on the subject, and hastily commenced their preparations for leaving the cavern, in which they called on me to join them. I then confessed, that it was my intention to remain with our brave leader, till he had chosen the retreat to which he meant to retire. My declaration seemed to excite no surprise, nor was the least effort used by any of my companions to change my design. The significant glances which passed between them, however, sufficiently informed me that they did not mean I should escape sharing the fate which they meditated for Angelo, who, like myself, easily comprehended their intentions, but did not seem to fear them. In less than an hour the whole troop had arranged every thing for their separation and departure, and their manner of parting with their leader unequivocally confirmed us in our belief of their resolve of ensnaring him if they could. Perfectly aware of the danger of his situation, Angelo had determined not to quit the cavern till after they were gone, when

it was his intention to take refuge amid some of the wild intricacies of the Trentino mountains, till the decision of his son's fate at Venice should be known to him; a circumstance which, he believed, would be exactly ascertained by still employing me as his spy and agent in the affair. For the first time, however, the confidence of Angelo in me was misplaced:—but——" And here Borachio paused—The glow of confusion, and involuntary self-contempt, marked his strong features, and his whole manner was that of a man conscious that he could give no sufficient excuse for the treacherous and cowardly act he had committed.—This change in his appearance was attentively remarked by his examiners, who, however, made no comment upon it, and, after a few minutes' hesitation, he added—"I have little more to relate, and I cannot force myself to dwell on this subject.—When the troop departed, I followed, under plea of watching what rout they took, but in fact I hastened with all the speed I could to the town of Cadore, which is but three leagues from the cavern, and, in a few hours, returned, accompanied by a large party of sbirri, into whose custody I delivered both Angelo and myself." Again Borachio hesitated an instant ere he proceeded. "I do not say that I now repent what I then did; but, at the moment when I led the curious and impatient sbirri into the interior of the cavern, and beheld the look of Angelo, as I stam-

mered out, 'There is your prisoner,' I would have given worlds could I have recalled the act.—It was a look in which amazement and indignant contempt were so strikingly mingled, that I felt myself the vilest and most abject of beings:—yet he spoke not a single word. On being surrounded by the sbirri, he resigned his scymeter, and haughtily bowed his head in token of submission.—Shrinking behind a group of the officers, I hastily approached the table at which he had been sitting as we rushed in, and, with a trembling hand, poured out a goblet of wine, into which I then threw the contents of a small vial of slow subtle poison, which I had provided for the purpose. Advancing to my fallen chief, I presented him the goblet.—He fixed on me a glance of wild and earnest scrutiny, then instantly snatching it from my hand, swallowed the deadly draught."

"He then comprehended your meaning?" hastily observed one of the council.

"I do not say so: I believe not," replied Borachio. "I have accurately described his look and action: it is not for me to decide how far he understood me. The moment he had drunk the wine, he motioned to the sbirri his readiness to accompany them, and we were immediately placed under a separate guard; nor did I again behold him till we entered the hall of the inquisition. My information," added Borachio, after another slight pause, "is now closed; for every further particular relating to the

Count di Udina, his own journal must be referred to."

Borachio, though a cross-examination of two days produced no variation in his testimony, was still detained a prisoner, till the persons whom he had mentioned should be summoned to the corroboration of the detail he had given. The different servants of the Rovenza family, and the gondoliers who had been employed on Angelo's midnight visit to the pallazo, were all brought before the tribunal; and their testimony gave full confirmation of the truth of his account. In short, every method taken by the council for the most profound investigation of so extraordinary an affair produced added proofs of Orazio's innocence of any participation in his unfortunate father's crimes and errors.

CHAP. XIV.

At length the impatiently-wished for arrival of the Countess di Mirandini and her daughter was announced; and all parties deeply interested in this important cause looked forward to a speedy termination of their anxiety. It is needless to dwell on the alarms and apprehensions which the amiable countess and her lovely daughter experienced on their journey from the Convent of Santa Clara to Venice, or their trepidation when, before the tribunal

of the Council of Ten, they both separately underwent an examination of the strictest nature, the result of which, however, still more unequivocally confirmed the truth of those testimonies already in possession of the inquisition; but as every event which they had to relate has already been detailed to the reader, there is no occasion for a repetition of their evidence. The council, perfectly convinced of the innocence of Orazio di Udina, had no longer cause to hesitate in their wishes of pronouncing him at liberty, or of restoring to him the unjustly-forfeited name and fortune of his ancestors; and it now only remained to ascertain, from the journal of the unfortunate Costanza, how far his actions, as the robber Angelo, would disgrace his memory, or render impossible the honourable advancement of his guiltless and unhappy son.

This journal, replete with incidents of the most singular and affecting nature, was but a record of those acts of humanity and severe justice by which the enthusiastic but erroneous conduct of the mistaken Udina had been distinguished while chief of the banditti; but among these events there were some which peculiarly interested the state; and it was now for the first time discovered that to Angelo Guicciardini was to be attributed the detection of several deep and dangerous conspiracies, of which the council had been forewarned in time to

prevent the fatal consequences which might have resulted from their success.

Secret and mysterious denunciations had been at several different times sent to St. Mark's; and although the truth of the information contained in them had always proved to be correct, yet it had been observed, that the informer had never claimed the rewards of his zeal. In the journal of Angelo the means by which these discoveries had been made were fully developed; and now, while the council were amazed at the indefatigable ardour, the numerous resources, and well-conducted plans, which the record of these events evinced in the hapless writer, they could not withhold the tribute of admiration, national gratitude, and compassion, which the contemplation of Udina's great talents, patriotic zeal, disinterested affection for his native country, and his perverted reason, alternately excited in their minds.

The perusal of this history raised the general indignation against the cruel and treacherous Rovenza to the greatest height; and a death of the most public ignominy was decreed as the reward of those enormous crimes, by which he had deprived the state of the services of an illustrious character, whose brilliant talents might have rendered him the greatest boast and ornament of his country. As every event relative to his private concerns was also minutely noted, and perfectly corresponded with the evidence of Borachio, and the

various declarations of the different persons engaged in the affair, not the faintest shadow of doubt could rest on the character of Orazio. The council was therefore unanimously eager to acknowledge his claims to the titles and estates of his family, and to devise some method of concealing from the public, that in the robber Angelo Guicciardini had been discovered the lamented and ill-fated Costanza di Udina.

In consequence of these determinations, Orazio and his friends were in a few days set at liberty; and the former, by a formal revocation of the unjust sentence which had so long rendered the name of Udina extinct, restored to his hereditary rights. In the publication of the injured Udina's innocence was also included that of his estimable friend the Count di Mirandini, and the atrocity of the detestable Rovenza was fully revealed to the world.

On the day which restored Orazio to liberty, the remains of his regretted parent were privately removed from the prisons of St. Mark, and, by the permission of the council, conveyed to a remote castle belonging to the Udinas, and interred in the ancient chapel adjoining to that edifice, near which the grief of his amiable son immediately impelled him to found a small convent of monks, intending to endow it richly for the performance of perpetual masses for the repose of the soul of that

hapless father, and as a testimony of devout gratitude to heaven.

While Orazio, accompanied by the Count Ferbonino and the Father Salvati, were absent on this mournful occasion, the Countess di Mirandini and her daughter, with their faithful attendant Lodelli, received the most gratifying reception at the pallazo of the amiable Contessa di Luzzana. But while the hearts of these estimable females were filled with the liveliest emotions of pious gratitude to the Most High, for the almost miraculously fortunate termination of their sufferings, they were deeply impressed with sympathetic sorrow for the misfortunes of the beloved and respected Marchesa di Rovenza; who, still lingering on the confines of the grave, wept over the horrible, but justly merited, fate of her guilty husband and the deplorable destiny of her children; and needed all the soothing consolations of religion and friendship, to inspire her with some degree of resignation to the awful decrees of an all-wise Providence. Too tenderly regarded by her friends and domestics to be fully informed of all the calamities which had overtaken her family, she was for a time ignorant that her son was dead, or that, in a few days after her removal from the Villa di Rovenza, Ottavania had also expired, in a paroxysm of the fever under which she then laboured. The discovery of her husband's impending punishment threw her into such agonies for the

fate of her children, that it was judged more advisable to inform her they were no more, than to suffer her to continue in such anguish and terror for their future destiny in the world. The consciousness that her misguided children were beyond the reach of those sufferings and ignominy which the crimes of their father would have rendered their only inheritance, and the unwearied assiduities of her friends, poured on her wounded heart the healing balm of pious resignation, and gave a favourable turn to the severe indisposition which had threatened her life. In the commencement of this pleasing change, her sympathising friends most fervently rejoiced, as it afforded them an opportunity of removing her from Venice to the Villa di Luzzana, where, with the Countess di Mirandini, Cecilia, and the Signora della Albina, she received all those heart-soothing attentions which her situation claimed. While these virtuous friends were thus occupied, and while Orazio was absent with the Count Ferbonino and the Father Salvati, fulfilling the last duties to the remains of the lamented Udina, the awful preparations for the public execution of Rovenza and his vile agent Fabricio took place in Venice. The ignominious publicity of such a death the wretched marchese was, however, spared. From the moment when he was taken from the hall, after the discovery of the Count di Udina, he was seized with

so violent a return of his mental malady as baffled the skill of those employed to restore him to reason; and on the night preceding the day fixed for the execution, he expired suddenly, in all the horrors of frantic despair. Thus closed the existence of a man, whose evil impulses and crimes originated in the cruel neglect of his early education, and in the unnatural dislike of his maternal parent, which, by exposing him to the danger of imbibing the most malevolent and pernicious prejudices, laid the foundation of that unfeeling cruelty and dark hypocrisy which governed his every principle and action through life. The menial instrument of many of his crimes, Fabricio, suffered the punishment he merited, with all the trembling submission which an awakened consciousness of his own guilt, and the fear of death, impart to a man on whom religious obligations had hitherto made no impression.

Saved from the necessity of inflicting punishment on the Count di Udina for his errors as the Bandit Guicciardini, the council yielded to their inclination to pardon Borachio the commission of a crime which by the death of the brave, but erring, Costanza, had afforded them an opportunity of concealing in some measure from the world, the hapless destiny of that extraordinary character; and the traitor robber was accordingly set at liberty, but under the most severe injunctions to leave im-

mediately the Venetian territories. He obeyed, and met his death in an attempt to rejoin some of his former companions.

CHAP. XV.

The return of Orazio di Udina, with the Count Ferbonino, and the Father Salvati, to Venice, was now most anxiously expected by the Bishop of Verona, and those illustrious characters in the state who were desirous of evincing their renewal of that long suspended regard, which had been once universally possessed by the family of Udina, but the impatient Orazio, now informed that his adored Cecilia was at the Villa di Luzzana, could not be prevailed upon to proceed to Venice to receive the congratulations of his expecting friends, till he had first thrown himself at the feet of the lovely object of his tenderest affection.

The meeting of these amiable lovers was such as might be expected after an interval of separation so replete with the most distressing events, and the most agonizing suspense. Cecilia, until the moment of the arrival of the officers of the state inquisition at the convent of Santa Clara, to conduct the countess and herself to Venice, had been entirely ignorant of Orazio's situation; nor did she fully understand the extent of his danger, or the

real name and rank of the robber Angelo, till after the examination before the tribunal of the state inquisition, and her arrival at the pallazo of the Contessa di Luzzana, where she received from her mother an explanation of the whole affair. But although assured of the safety of Orazio the shock of the development of such mysterious and calamitous circumstances occasioned, was more than her gentle mind and delicate frame could well support; and when her anxious lover arrived, he found her much indisposed. The hectic glow which suffused her pale cheek, the radiant yet soft expression which love imparted to her modest eyes, as in tremulous accents she timidly expressed her felicity at the fortunate termination of his troubles, could not conceal from the tender, fearful observation of Orazio, the change which suspense and sorrow had wrought in her appearance and he was plunged into the most distracting apprehensions of losing her for ever till the often repeated assurances of the amiable countess her mother, added to her own, that she was already much recovered calmed in some degree the agonizing tumult of his heart, and inspired him with hope—a hope which was soon heightened almost to confidence, when Cecilia, at the command of her inestimable parent, softly yielded him her hand, and looked the enraptured promise that she would live for him. The absolute necessity of fulfilling the grateful duty which he owed the

state, and those generous friends who so eagerly desired his return to Venice, would not permit him to remain above a few hours at the Villa di Luzzana, and he was once more compelled to tear himself from the presence of his lovely intended bride, and defer those explanations which each was so desirous of giving the other, until his return: nor was he, in this short visit, admitted to the apartments of the Marchesa di Rovenza, who still continued so weak, that it was judged prudent not to expose her to those strong emotions, which the sight of her nephew was so likely to occasion.

CHAP. XVI.

The stay of Orazio and his friends in Venice was not prolonged above a week; and during their absence, the amiable party secluded at the Villa di Luzzana endeavoured to tranquillize their minds by resignation to the sufferings they had endured, and by the contemplation of that happier destiny which now opened to their view.

In one of those intervals which the young Cecilia passed from the side of the marchesa's couch, she ventured to demand some explanation of the Signora della Albina, respecting the mysterious figure she had seen in the oratory belonging to the apartments she had occupied in the Villa di

Rovenza. When relating this fearful incident to her mother, in the cavern in the Cadorino, the countess could not afford her the slightest elucidation of this mystery, and was as much shocked as herself by the detail.

What was her surprise on now learning from the Signora della Albina that this supposed apparition was, in reality, the Marchese di Rovenza, who, in one of his fits of mental derangement, had thus intruded into the oratory from the apartment which he so frequently visited to meditate on the memory of Veronica di Udina. Subject to these transient flights of insanity, and to all the horrors to which the unfortunate sleep-walker is exposed, Rovenza was particularly liable to these awful affections, at such times as his mind was piculiarly agitated by any perplexing circumstances; and had he not been most carefully watched by Fabricio at these periods, his nocturnal wanderings must have proved fatal to his life.

This explanation perfectly accounted to Cecilia for the emotion which both the Signora della Albina and the Marchesa di Rovenza had displayed when informed by her of that circumstance; nor had she any difficulty in believing that the similar appearance she had witnessed in the gallery of the Castle of Torcello was the marchese. This was, in fact, the case.—Fatigued with his journey, and his mind much disordered by the vexations in which he

was involved, he had retired early to repose on the night of his arrival at the castle, and had risen from harassing slumbers in that dreadful state of unconciousness, and unobserved by Fabricio, who was half asleep in the anti-room, had strayed out into the gallery: nor was he missed by the latter, till his return from following Cecilia and Lodelli, whose cries, on beholding such an appalling object, rouzed Fabricio from his doze, and led to the discovery of Orazio's being in the castle; but when Fabricio, eager to communicate to his lord that the young Udina was then with Cecilia, hastened back to the chamber where he believed the marchese was still sleeping, he found him in the anti-room, pale, haggard, and exhausted, and but just awakened from his fearful insensibility.

The day after Cecilia received this explanation of a mystery which had so much affected her mind, information was brought to the villa, by a special courier deputed by the state, of the death of the Marchese di Rovenza. The courier was also the bearer of a packet for the Countess di Mirandini, peculiarly interesting to herself and her daughter. On opening the envelope, their attention was claimed by a letter from the principal state inquisitor, who deigned to acquaint her that, in the course of the investigation which had been made by the council, relative to the concerns of every individual implicated in the late important trial, they had discovered

that the Count de Weilburgh, after having been mortally wounded by some of the party, employed to rescue her from his power, had been carried by his surviving attendants to the small monastery of Carmelites, not far from the spot on which the affray took place, and had there expired, after lingering a few days in extreme torture of mind and body. Previous to his decease, however, he had become so sensible of his own guilt, and so truly repentant, that he had made a most unreserved confession of all the actions which weighed heavily on his soul; particularly of his conduct towards herself; and as in this interesting detail, he had minutely described the manner in which he had imposed upon the court of judicature at Florence the belief of her being his wife, it would furnish her with the most undeniable means of disproving this supposed marriage, and of reclaiming those estates which he had so long unjustly held in her right. The inquisitor then proceeded to state, that, as the late Count di Mirandini and his family had been so cruelly injured by the treacherous impositions which had involved his honour in the undeserved sentence formerly passed on the Count di Udina, the state considered it as an indispensible duty to offer to the survivors a testimony of their regret for the error which had occasioned them so much calamity; and, therefore, presented to her daughter a portion, which, although scarcely equal to her merits, it

was hoped would not be rejected, if considered as a tribute to injured innocence.

The astonished and agitated countess now forbore to continue the examination of the packet, and hastily unclosing the casket, discovered its contents to be a set of magnificent jewels, and an order on the principal bank of Venice for the sum of ten thousand pounds.

From the moment she learned that her wretched lord was no more, the Marchese di Rovenza visibly recovered. The resignation and calmness diffused over her mind by the consolations of religion, and the contemplation of the felicity which awaited her friends, contributed to the restoration of her health, and before the return of the young Count di Udina, she was capable of enjoying the conversation of the amiable party, whose society she intended soon to relinquish for the placid serenity of a cloister. As the principal possessions of the late marchese had been derived from the ruin of the Udina family, all these estates now reverted to Orazio; but the marchesa was still sufficiently wealthy in her paternal inheritance. Of this, however, she reserved but a part to supply her portion in the convent to which she meant to retire, and for those charitable uses to which she so silently and benevolently contributed.

At length the return of Orazio, accompanied by the Bishop of Verona, the

Count Ferbonino, and M. d'Erville, was announced at the Villa di Luzzana.

Their arrival brought all the satisfaction which this amiable society wished to possess. The meeting between the marchesa and her nephew was equally affecting to both, but the latter found consolation for all his sufferings in beholding the dawn of health once more opening on the fair cheek of his adored Cecilia. In Venice he had been received with the most flattering distinction, and the state, evincing the highest opinion of his military talents, had already appointed him to a high command in the army: thus offering him the most favourable opportunity of proving to his country that the virtues and heroism of Costanza di Udina could be revived in the person of his son. The state, however, was then at peace, and although Orazio burned with impatient ardour to signalize himself in the field of glory, yet love imperiously claimed all the homage which his liberty from strict military duties enabled him to pay. In respect to the memory of his hapless father, his union with his beloved Cecilia was deferred to the expiration of six months. During this interval, the Marchesa di Rovenza retired into the convent she had chosen as her future residence, bearing with her the affectionate regrets of her nephew and her friends, who, although they tenderly mourned the loss of her valuable society, were yet too well convinced that in the perform-

ance of religious duties, alone she could find peace for her long afflicted mind.

The Countess di Mirandini and her daughter, yielding to the entreaties of the Countess di Luzzana, continued to reside at the villa of the latter till the expiration of the time fixed for the union of her daughter with the young Count di Udina, when the whole party proceeded into Tuscany, and took possession of the magnificent Pallazo di Bernini, the paternal abode of the illustrious ancestors of the Countess di Mirandini, and here the enraptured Orazio received the reward of all his cares in the possession of his adored Cecilia.

By the assistance of M. d'Erville, who had preceded them into Tuscany, the pretended marriage of the Countess di Mirandini and the Count de Weilburgh had been invalidated, her estates recovered, and those disposed of by the Count di Mirandini re-purchased with the accumulated wealth bequeathed to Orazio by the generous benefactor of his youth.

After a residence of a few months in Tuscany, the young Count and Countess di Udina returned to Venice, to inhabit the ancient Pallazo di Udina, now totally altered from the appearance it had assumed while in the possession of Fovenza. Here, however, this amiable couple had scarcely received the gratulating welcome of their friends, when Orazio was summoned to the field, and in this his first campaign, won the unfading laurels at-

tendant on unexampled valour and military talent—thus restoring to the illustrious name of Udina all its former splendour and dignity.

THE END.

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